THE

HISTORY

OF

Our Bleſſed LORD and SAVIOUR

JESUS CHRIST.

WITH

The Lives of his APOSTLES and EVANGELISTS.

AND OTHER

EMINENT PERSONS and MARTYRS,

Who firſt propagated the

CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

CONTAINING

The whole Doctrine of CHRISTIANITY, the Evidences on which it is founded, and the Manner of its Eſtabliſhment in different Parts of the World.

TOGETHER WITH

Satisfactory Anſwers to the Objections made againſt our Holy Religion by the JEW, the GENTILE, and the DEIST, or FREE-THINKER, of the preſent Age.

By S. NELSON, D. D.

Author of the UNIVERSAL BIBLE.

LONDON:

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AN

INTRODUCTORY DISSERTATION,

IN WHICH

The Evidences for CHRISTIANITY are fairly ſtated, the NEW TESTAMENT proved to be genuine, and the RELIGION of JESUS truly Divine.

PERHAPS no nation or age has exceeded our own, in clearly ſtating the nature of moral virtue, inforcing the practice of it by the views of its native beauty, and beneficial conſequences, both to private perſons and ſocieties. And yet I fear I may add, that there have been few ages or countries where vice has more generally triumphed, in its moſt audacious, and, in other reſpects, moſt odious forms.

What cauſe, it is therefore reaſonable to aſk, can produce ſo ſtrange a circumſtance? Doubtleſs from that unhappy diſregard, either to the Goſpel in general, or to its peculiar and eſſential truths, ſo viſible in the world, and which appears to be continually increaſing. It is too evident that multitudes among us, like thoſe of old, who thought and profeſſed themſelves the wiſeſt of mankind, or in other words, the *freeſt thinkers* of the age, have been deſirous of baniſhing God and his truths from their knowledge: and it is therefore the leſs to be wondered at, if God *has given them up to a reprobate mind*; to the moſt infamous luſts and enormities; and to a depth of degeneracy, which while it is in part the natural conſequence, is in part alſo the juſt, but dreadful puniſhment of their apoſtacy from the faith. And I am perſuaded that thoſe who wiſh well to the cauſe of public virtue, as every true chriſtian moſt certainly does, cannot ſerve it more effec-

tually, than by endeavouring to eſtabliſh men in the belief of the Goſpel in general, and to affect their minds with its moſt diſtinguiſhing truths. The latter I flatter myſelf I have ſufficiently done in the following lives of the bleſſed Jeſus and his apoſtles and followers, and propoſe in this Diſſertation to prove that the Chriſtian Religion is true, and owes its origin to God himſelf.

It will be needleſs to obſerve, that this is a matter of the higheſt importance, as every one will apprehend that it is the foundation of all our hopes. It is abſolutely neceſſary, in this age of libertiniſm, that every chriſtian ſhould be able *to give a reaſon for the hope that is in him*, and to put to ſilence the tongues of thoſe men who have *evil will at Sion*. And may the Almighty enable me to plead his cauſe with ſucceſs. May the divine Spirit accompany theſe arguments, that the faith of my readers being more and more eſtabliſhed, it may appear that the tree is watered at the roots, by all the other graces growing and flouriſhing in an equal proportion.

God has made ample proviſion for the honour and ſupport of his Goſpel, by furniſhing it with a variety of proofs, which may with undiminiſhed, and indeed with growing conviction be diſplayed in the eyes of the whole world. And we ſhould be greatly wanting in gratitude to him, in zeal for a Redeemer's kingdom, and in charitable concern for the converſion of thoſe who reject the Goſpel, as well as for the edification of thoſe who embrace it, ſhould we wholly overlook thoſe arguments, or neglect to acquaint ourſelves with them. This is the evidence I am going to propoſe, and I beg my reader would peruſe it with becoming attention. I write to you as a rational creature; judge therefore of the reaſonableneſs of what I am going to offer.

In proſecution of this great deſign, I ſhall endeavour more particularly to ſhew, that if we take the matter on a general ſurvey, it will appear highly probable, that ſuch a ſcheme of doctrines and precepts, as we find Chriſtianity to be, ſhould indeed have been a *divine revelation*; and then, that if we examine into the external evidence of it, we ſhall find it *certain in fact*, that it was ſo, and that it had its origin from on high.

Firſt then, I am to ſhew, that taking the matter merely in theory, it will appear highly propable, that ſuch a ſyſtem as the Goſpel ſhould be indeed a divine revelation.

To prove this, I will firſt ſhew,---That the ſtate of mankind was ſuch, as greatly to need a revelation;—That there ſeems from the light of nature, encouragement to hope, that God would grant one;—That it is reaſonable

reaſonable to believe that if any were made, if ſhould be introduced and tranſmitted, as we are told Chriſtianity was; and that its general nature and ſubſtance ſhould be ſuch, as we find that of the Goſpel is. If I can ſatisfactorily prove theſe particulars, there will be a ſtrong *preſumptive evidence* that the *Goſpel is from God*, and a fair way will be opened for that more *divine proof*, which I principally intend.

1. The caſe of mankind is naturally ſuch, as to need a divine revelation.

I would not be underſtood to ſpeak here of man in his original ſtate; though even then ſome inſtruction from above ſeemed neceſſary to inform him of many particulars, which it was highly proper for him then to know: but I ſpeak of him in the degenerate condition he now ſo evidently lies, by whatever means he fell into it. It is very eaſy to make florid encomiums on the perfection of *natural light*, and to deceive unwary readers by an ambiguous term, as Dr. Tindal has done in his *Chriſtianity as old as the Creation*; a fallacy beneath an ingenuous reaſoner, and which alone ought to have expoſed his book to the contempt of every intelligent reader. Truth needs no diſguiſe; a candid advocate ſcorns ſuch ſubterfuges; let fact ſpeak, and the controverſy will ſoon be decided. I appeal to every intelligent reader who is acquainted with the records of antiquity, or that has any knowledge of the preſent ſtate of thoſe countries where Chriſtianity is unknown, whether it is not too obvious a truth, that the whole heathen world has lain and ſtill lies ina ſtate of wickedneſs. Have not the greater part of them been perpetually bewildered in their religious notions and practices, vaſtly different from each other, and almoſt equally differing on all ſides from the appearances of truth and reaſon? Is any thing ſo wild as not to have been believed; any thing ſo infamous as not to have been practiſed by them, while they not only pretended to juſtify it by reaſon, but to have conſecrated it as part of their religion? To this very day, what are the diſcoveries of new nations in the American or African world, but, generally ſpeaking, the opening of new ſcenes of enormity? Rapine, luſt, cruelty, human ſacrifices, and the moſt ſtupid idolatries, are, and, for ought I can find, always have been, the morality and religion of almoſt all the pagan nations under heaven; and to ſay that there have been ſome ſmothered ſparks of reaſon within, which, if cheriſhed, might have led them to truth and happineſs, is only ſaying that they have been ſo much the more criminal, and therefore ſo much the more miſerable.

But perhaps ſome of my readers have only heard thoſe things by uncertain report. If this be the caſe, look around you within the ſphere of your own obſervation, and remark the temper and character of the gene-

rality of thoſe who have been educated in a Chriſtian, and even in a Proteſtant country. Obſerve their ignorance and forgetfulneſs of the Divine Being, their impieties, their debaucheries, their fraud, their oppreſſion, their pride, their avarice, their ambition, their unnatural ſenſibility of the wants and ſorrows and intereſts of each other; and when you ſee how bad they generally are in the midſt of ſo many advantages, judge by that of the probable ſtate of thoſe that want them. When the candid reader has well weighed theſe particulars, let him judge whether a *revelation* be an *unneceſſary* thing.

2. There is, from the light of nature, conſiderable encouragement to hope that God would favour his creatures with ſo deſirable a thing as a revelation appears to be.

That a revelation is in itſelf a poſſible thing is evident beyond all ſhadow of doubt. Shall not he *that made man's mouth*, who has given us this wonderful faculty of diſcovering our ſentiments, and communicating our ideas to each other; ſhall not he be able to converſe with his rational creatures, and by ſenſible manifeſtations, or by inward impreſſions, to convey the knowledge of things, which lie beyond the ken of their natural faculties, and yet may be highly conducive to their advantage? To own a God, and to deny him ſuch a power, would be a notorious contradiction.——But it may appear much more dubious, whether he will pleaſe to confer ſuch a favour on ſinful creatures.

Now I acknowledge that we could not certainly conclude he would ever do it; conſidering on the one hand, how juſtly they ſtood expoſed to his final diſpleaſure; and on the other, what proviſion he had made by the frame of the human mind, and of nature around us, for giving us ſuch notices of himſelf, as would leave us inexcuſable, if we either failed to know him, or to glorify him as God, as the apoſtle argues at large (Rom. i. 20, &c.) Nevertheleſs, we ſhould, methinks, have ſomething of this kind to hope, from conſidering God as the indulgent father of his creatures; from obſerving the tender care he takes of us, and the liberal ſupply which he grants for the ſupport of the animal life; eſpecially from the proviſion he has made for man, conſidered as a guilty and calamitous creature, by the medicinal and healing virtues he has given to the productions of nature, which man, in a perfect ſtate of rectitude and happineſs, never would have needed. This is a circumſtance which ſeemed ſtrongly to intimate, that he would ſome time or other graciouſly provide an adequate remedy to heal the minds of the children of men; and that he would interpoſe to inſtruct them, in his own nature, in the manner in which he is to be ſerved, and in the final treatment which they may expect from him. And I think, ſuch an

appre-

apprehenſion ſeems very congruous to the ſentiments of the generality of mankind, as appears from the many pretences to divine revelation, which have ſo often been made, and the readineſs of multitudes to receive them upon very ſlender proofs; a ſufficient proof that men naturally expect ſome ſuch kind of interpoſition of the deity.

3. It is natural to conclude, that if a revelation were given, it would be introduced and tranſmitted, in ſuch a manner as the Evangeliſts tells us Chriſtianity was.

It is, for inſtance, highly probable, that it ſhould be taught, either by ſome illuſtrious perſon, ſent down from a ſuperior world, or at leaſt by a man of eminent wiſdom and piety, who ſhould himſelf have been not only a teacher but an example of univerſal goodneſs. In order to this, it ſeems probable, that he ſhould be led through a ſeries of calamities and diſtreſs; ſince otherwiſe he could not have been a pattern of the virtue which adorn adverſity, and are peculiar to it. And it might alſo have been expected that in the extremity of his diſtreſs, the Almighty, whoſe meſſenger he was, ſhould, in ſome extraordinary manner, have interpoſed, either to preſerve, or to recover him from death.

It is moreover exceeding probable, that ſuch a perſon, and perhaps alſo they who were at firſt employed as his meſſengers to the world, ſhould be endowed with a power of working miracles, both to awaken men's attention, and to prove his divine miſſion, and the conſequent truth of his doctrines; ſome of which might perhaps be capable of no other proof; or if they were, it is certain that no method of arguing is ſo ſhort, ſo plain, and ſo forcible, and on the whole ſo well ſuited to conviction, and probably the reformation of mankind, as a courſe of evident, repeated, and uncontrouled miracles. And ſuch a method of proof is eſpecially adapted to the populace, who are incomparably the greater part of mankind, and for whoſe benefit we may aſſure ourſelves a revelation would be chiefly deſigned. I might add, it was no way improbable, though not in itſelf certain, that a diſpenſation ſhould open gradually to the world; and that the moſt illuſtrious meſſenger of God to men, ſhould be uſhered in by ſome predictions which ſhould raiſe a great expectation of his appearance, and have an evident accompliſhment in him.

As for the propagation of a religion ſo introduced, it ſeems no way improbable, that having been thus eſtabliſhed in its firſt age, it ſhould be tranſmitted to future generations by credible teſtimony, as other important facts are. It is certain, that affairs of the utmoſt moment, tranſacted among men, depend on teſtimony: on this voyages are undertaken, ſettlements made,

made, and controverſies decided; controverſies on which not only the eſtates but the lives of men depend. And though it muſt be owned, that ſuch an hiſtorical evidence is not equally convincing with miracles which are wrought before our own eyes; yet it is certain, it may riſe to ſuch a degree as to exclude all reaſonable doubt. And I know not why we ſhould expect, that the evidence of a revelation ſhould be ſuch, as univerſally to compel the immediate acquieſcence of all to whom it is offered. To me it appears much more probable, that it ſhould be ſo adjuſted, as to be a kind of touchſtone to the tempers, and characters of men, capable indeed of giving ample ſatisfaction to the diligent and candid enquirer, yet attended with ſome circumſtances, from whence the captious and perverſe might take occaſion to cavil and object. Such we might reaſonably ſuppoſe a revelation would be, and ſuch it is maintained Chriſtianity is. The teachers of it undertake to prove, that it was thus introduced, thus eſtabliſhed, and thus tranſmitted; and I truſt, that this is a ſtrong preſumption in its favour, eſpecially as we can add,

4. That the principal doctrines contained in the Goſpel are of ſuch a nature, as we might in general ſuppoſe thoſe of a divine revelation would be, rational, practical, and ſublime.

It is natural to imagine, that in a revelation of a religion from God, the great principles of natural religion ſhould be clearly aſſerted, and ſtrongly maintained: Such, I mean, as the exiſtence, the unity, the perfection, and the providence of God; the eſſential and immutable difference between moral good and evil; the obligations we are under to the various branches of virtue, whether human, ſocial, or divine; the value and immortality of the ſoul; and the rewards and puniſhments of a future ſtate. All theſe particulars every rational perſon would conclude were contained in it; and that upon the whole it ſhould appear calculated to form men's minds to a proper temper, rather than to amuſe them with curious ſpeculations.

It might indeed be farther ſuppoſed, that ſuch a revelation would contain ſome things which could not have been learnt from the higheſt improvements of natural light: and conſidering the infinite and unfathomable nature of the Almighty, it would be more than probable, that many things might be hinted at, and referred to, which our feeble faculties could not be able fully to comprehend. Yet we ſhould expect to find theſe introduced with a practical view as directing us to duties before unknown, or ſuggeſting powerful motives to make us reſolute and conſtant in the diſcharge of the reſt. We ſhould for inſtance, expect to find on what terms, and to what degree, pardon and happineſs might be expected by ſinful creatures.

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The reader's thoughts have undoubtedly prevented me in the application of theſe characters to the Chriſtian Religion; and therefore it will be unneceſſary to juſtify that application. In ſhort, the Chriſtian ſyſtem is undoubtedly worthy of God; nor is it poſſible to imagine from whom elſe it could have proceeded *.

Thus have I conſidered the firſt branch of the argument, and ſhewn I hope ſatisfactorily, that taking the Chriſtian ſcheme only in theory, it appears highly probable. The truth is, that to embrace the goſpel is ſo ſafe, and upon the whole ſo comfortable a thing, that I think a wiſe man would deliberately venture his all upon it, though nothing more could be offered for its confirmation. But bleſſed be God, we have a great deal more to offer in this important cauſe; and can add with ſtill greater confidence, that it is only probable in theory, but

Secondly, That it is in fact certain, that Chriſtianity is indeed a divine revelation.

On this I confeſs the chief ſtreſs is to be laid; and therefore I ſhall inſiſt more largely on this branch of the argument, and endeavour, by the divine aſſiſtance, to prove the certainty of this great, this important fact. And in order to this, it will be neceſſary to ſhew,

I. That the books of the New Teſtament, now extant, may be depended upon as written by the firſt preachers and publiſhers of Chriſtianity. And,

II. That from hence it will certainly follow, that what they aſſert is true, and that the religion they teach, brings with it ſuch evidences of a divine authority, as may juſtly recommend it to our acceptance.

Each of theſe heads would furniſh matter for ſeveral volumes; but as I am writing only a Diſſertation, it is my buſineſs to hint at the moſt obvious and important particulars, by which they may briefly be illuſtrated and confirmed.

1. I am to prove, that the books of the New Teſtament, now extant, were written by the firſt preachers and publiſhers of Chriſtianity.

I ſhall

* From what has been ſaid, it ſufficiently appears that a revelation was abſolutely neceſſary to inſtruct mankind in the moſt important principles of religion, and conſequently Lord Boſingbroke's arguments, againſt the neceſſity of an extraordinary revelation, falls to the ground, like a mighty ſtructure when the foundation is deſtroyed.

I ſhall now confine myſelf to the books of the New Teſtament; not that I think the Authority of the Old to be ſuſpected, or the uſe of it by any means to be deſpiſed. God forbid! It is an invaluable treaſure which demands our daily pleaſing and grateful peruſal, and is capable of being defended in a manner which I am perſuaded its moſt ſubtle enemies will never be able to anſwer. But the nature of my preſent argument, and the limits to which this introductory diſcourſe is confined, oblige me at preſent to wave the proof of it; any farther than as it is implied in what I have more immediately in view.

After premiſing theſe particulars, I ſhall go on to the argument, and advance it by the following degrees. I ſhall prove, that Chriſtianity is an ancient religion;—That there was ſuch a perſon as Jeſus of Nazareth crucified above ſeventeen hundred years ago at Jeruſalem;—That the firſt preachers of his religion wrote books, which went by the name of thoſe that now make up the volume of the New Teſtament;—That they are preſerved in the original to the preſent time;—And that the Engliſh tranſlation of them now publickly uſed, is in the main faithful, and may be depended upon.

1. It is certain, that Chriſtianity is not a new religion, but that it was maintained by great multitudes ſoon after the time in which the Goſpels tell us Jeſus appeared.

That there was, conſiderably more than ſixteen hundred years ago, a body of men that went by the name of Chriſtians, is almoſt as evident as that a race of men was then ſubſiſting in the world; nor do I know that any enemy to the religion of Jeſus has ever been vile and confident enough to diſpute it. Indeed there are ſuch numbers both of chriſtian and heathen writers who atteſt this fact, that it would be madneſs to deny it, and therefore ſuperfluous for me to prove it. But I cannot help obſerving that Tacitus, Suetonius, Pliny, Marcus Antoninus, and others, not only atteſt the exiſtence of ſuch a body of men, but alſo inform us of the extreme perſecutions they underwent in the very infancy of their religion; a ſtrong evidence that they were firmly perſuaded that their religion was from on high.

2. That there was ſuch a perſon as Jeſus of Nazareth, who was crucified at Jeruſalem, when Pontius Pilate was the Roman governor there.

It can never be imagined that multitudes of people ſhould take their names from Chriſt, and ſacrifice their lives for their adherence to him, even in the ſame age in which he is ſaid to have lived, if they had not been well

well assured, that there was such a person. Nay, Tacitus himself tells us that he was put to death under Pontius Pilate, who was procurator of Judea in the reign of Tiberius. And it is well known that the primitive Christian apologists often appeal to the acts of Pilate, or the memoirs of his government, which he, according to the custom of all other procurators, transmitted to Rome, as containing an account of these transactions: and as the appeal was made to those who had the command of the public records, we may assure ourselves such testimonies were then extant. But it is a fact which our enemies never denied. They owned it; they even gloried in it, and upbraided the christians with the infamous death of him whom they called their Saviour. Thus it sufficiently appears that there was at the time commonly supposed such a person as Christ, who professed himself a divine teacher, and who gathered many disciples, by whom his religion was afterwards published in the world.

3. It is also certain that the first publishers of this religion wrote books, which contained an account of the life and doctrine of Jesus their master, and which went by the names of those that now make up our New Testament.

It was in the nature of things highly probable that they would declare and publish to the world, in writing, the things they had seen and heard; considering how common books were in the age and countries in which they taught; and of how great importance an acquaintance with the history and doctrine of Christ was to the purposes which they so strenuously pursued; but we have much more than such a presumptive evidence.

The most inveterate adversaries to Christianity must grant, that we have books of great antiquity, written some fourteen, some fifteen, and some sixteen hundred years ago: in which mention is made of the life of Christ, as written by many, and especially by four of his disciples, who by way of evidence are stiled Evangelists. Great pains have indeed been taken to prove that some spurious pieces were published under the names of the apostles, containing the history of these things. But surely this must imply, that it was a thing known and allowed, that the apostles did write some narrations of this kind; as counterfeit coin implies some true money which it is designed to represent. And I am sure he must be very little acquainted with the ancient ecclesiastical writers, who does not know, that the primitive christians made a great difference between those writings which we call the canonical books of the New Testament, and others: which plainly shews, that they did not judge of writings merely by the names of their pretended authors, but enquired with an accuracy becoming the importance of these pretences. The result of this enquiry was,

that the four Goſpels, the Acts, thirteen Epiſtles of St. Paul, one of St. Peter, and one of St. John, were received upon ſuch evidence, that Euſebius, a moſt accurate and early critic in theſe things, could not learn that they had ever been diſputed. And afterwards the remaining books of the New Teſtament, namely, Hebrews, James, the ſecond of Peter, the ſecond and third of John, Jude, and the Revelations, were admitted as genuine, and added to the reſt. On the whole, it is ſufficiently plain, that the primitive Chriſtians were ſo thoroughly ſatisfied of the authority of the ſacred books, that they ſpeak of them, not only as credible and authentic, but as equal to the oracles of the Old Teſtament, as divinely inſpired, as the words of the ſpirit, as the law and organ of God, and as the rule of faith, which cannot be contradicted without the greateſt guilt; with many other expreſſions of the ſame kind, which often occur in their diſcourſes. To which I may add, that in ſome of their councils, the New Teſtament was placed on a throne, to ſignify their deſire, that all their controverſies might be determined, and their actions regulated by it.

From the whole, therefore, it is plain, that the primitive church did receive certain pieces which bore the ſame titles with the books of our New Teſtament. Now I think it is evident, that they were as capable of judging whether a book was written by Matthew, John, or Paul, as the ancient Romans could be of determining whether Horace, Tully, or Livy, wrote thoſe which go under their names. And I am ſure the intereſt of the former was much more concerned in the writings of the apoſtles, than that of the latter in the compoſitions of their poets, orators, or even their hiſtorians, and there is reaſon to believe, they would take much greater care to inform themſelves fully in the merits of the cauſe, and to avoid being impoſed upon by artifice and fiction. Let me now proceed to ſhew,

4. That the books of the New Teſtament have been preſerved in the main uncorrupted, to the preſent time, in the original language in which they were written.

This is a matter of the laſt importance; and, bleſſed be God, we have a proportional evidence; an evidence, in which the hand of Providence has indeed been remarkably ſeen; for I am confident, that there is no other ancient book in the world, which may ſo certainly and ſo eaſily be proved to be authentic.

And here, I will not argue merely from the piety of the primitive chriſtians, and the heroic actions and reſolution with which they choſe to endure the greateſt extremities, rather than deliver up their Bibles, tho' that conſideration is evidently of the greateſt weight; but ſhall intreat my

readers to conſider the utter impoſſibility of corrupting them. From the firſt ages they were received and read in the churches, as a part of their public worſhip, juſt as Moſes and the prophets were in the Jewiſh ſynagogues; they were preſently ſpread far and near, as the boundaries of the church were increaſed; they were early tranſlated into other languages, of which tranſlations ſome remain to this very day. Now when this was the caſe, how could they poſſibly be adulterated? Is it a thing to be ſuppoſed, or imagined, that thouſands and millions of people ſhould have come together from diſtant countries; and that, with all their diverſities of language and cuſtoms, and, I may add, of ſentiments too, they ſhould have agreed on corrupting a book which they all acknowledged to be the rule of their faith, and their manners, and the great charter by which they held their eternal hopes. It were madneſs to believe it, eſpecially when we conſider what numbers of heretics appeared in the very infancy of the church, who all pretended to build their notions on ſcripture, and moſt of them appealed to it as the final judge of controverſies. Now it is certain that theſe different ſects of Chriſtians were a perpetual guard upon one another, and rendered it impoſſible for one party to practiſe thus groſsly on the ſacred books, without the diſcovery and clamour of the reſt.

Nor muſt I omit to obſerve, that in every age, from the apoſtles time to our own, there have been numberleſs quotations made from the books of the New Teſtament; and a multitude of commentators in various languages and ſome of very ancient date, have been written upon them: ſo that if the books themſelves were loſt, I believe they might in a great meaſure, if not intirely, be recovered from the writings of others. And I may venture I ſay, that if all the quotations ever made from all the ancient writings now in Europe were amaſſed together, the bulk of them would by no means be comparable to that of the quotations taken from the New Teſtament alone. So that any man might, with much better reaſon diſpute, whether the writings aſcribed to Homer, Demoſthenes, Virgil, or Cæſar, be in the main ſuch as they left them, than he could queſtion it concerning thoſe of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Peter, James, and Paul, whether they were in the main ſo.

I ſay, in the main, becauſe we readily allow, that the hand of a printer or of a tranſcriber, might chance in ſome places to inſert one letter or word for another; and the various readings of this, as well as all other ancient books, prove that this has ſometimes been the caſe. But thoſe various readings are generally of ſo little importance, that he who can urge them as an objection againſt the aſſertion we are now maintaining, muſt have little judgment, or little integrity; and indeed after thoſe excellent things which have been ſaid on the ſubject by many defenders

of chriſtianity, he muſt, if he has read their writings, have little modeſty too.

Since then it appears that the books of the New Teſtament, as they now ſtand in the original, are, without any material alteration, ſuch as they were when they came from the hands of the ſacred authors, nothing remains to complete this part of the argument, but to ſhew,

5. That the tranſlation of them now in common uſe may be depended upon, as, in all material particulars, agreeable to the original.

This is a fact, of which the generality of readers are not able to judge immediately, tho' it is of the laſt importance: It is therefore with great pleaſure I reflect, how ample evidence they may have another way, to make their minds eaſy on this head. I mean, by the concurrent teſtimony of others, in circumſtances in which it cannot be imagined they would unite to deceive them.

There are few who preach the goſpel of the ſon of God, but have examined this matter with the greateſt care, and are able to judge in ſo eaſy a caſe; and who will all with me unanimouſly declare, that the common Engliſh tranſlation is in the main faithful and judicious. We do not indeed ſcruple, on ſome occaſion to animadvert upon it; but theſe remarks never affect the fundamentals of religion, and ſeldom reach any farther than the beauty of a figure, or the connection of an argument.

But the argument does not wholly reſt on the unanimous ſuffrage of the teachers of the goſpel; they cannot themſelves poſſibly deceive in this particular. The different ſects of proteſtants in this kingdom bear witneſs to this truth. For it is certain, that where a body of men diſſent from the public eſtabliſhment, and yet agree with the church from which they diſſent in uſing the ſame tranſlation, though they are capable of examining and judging of it; is as great an evidence as can be deſired, that ſuch a tranſlation is right in the main. But the diſſenters unanimouſly unite with us in bearing teſtimony to the oracles of God, as delivered in our own language; and conſequently our tranſlation may be depended upon.

Thus have I finiſhed the firſt part of my argument, and ſhewn that the chriſtian religion is certainly true, and that the New Teſtament is genuine. I ſhall next proceed to ſhew,

II. That from allowing the New Teſtament to be genuine, it will undeniably follow, that chriſtianity is a divine revelation.

And here a perſon is at firſt ready to be loſt in the multiplicity of arguments which ſurround him. It is very eaſy to find proofs; but difficult to range

range and diſpoſe them in ſuch an order as beſt to illuſtrate and confirm each other. I ſhall therefore offer them in the following natural ſeries.

The authors of the books contained in the New Teſtament were certainly capable of judging concerning the truth of the facts they aſſerted: their character, ſo far as we can judge of it by their writings, renders them worthy of regard; and they were under no temptation to attempt impoſing on the world by ſuch a ſtory as they have given us, if it had been falſe. Nevertheleſs, it is certain in fact, that they did gain credit, and ſucceeded in a moſt amazing manner, againſt all oppoſition. It is therefore certain that the facts which they aſſert were true; and if they were true, then it was reaſonable for their cotemporaries, and it is reaſonable for us, to receive the goſpel as a divine revelation; eſpecially if we conſider what has happened in the world for the confirmation of it, ſince firſt propagated by them. This is the concluſion to which I would lead you; and therefore let us ſeriouſly conſider each of the ſteps by which we arrive at it.

It is exceeding evident, that the writers of the New Teſtament certainly knew whether the facts they aſſerted were true or falſe.

And this they muſt have known, for this plain reaſon; becauſe they tell us, they did not truſt merely to the report even of perſons whom they thought moſt credible, but were preſent themſelves when ſeveral of the moſt important facts happened; and ſo received them on the teſtimony of their own ſenſes. On this St. John, in his firſt epiſtle, ch. i. ver. 1—3. lays a very great and reaſonable ſtreſs: "That which we have ſeen with our eyes;" and that not only by a ſudden glance, but "which we have *attentively* looked upon, and which *even* our hands have handled of the word of life." i. e. of Chriſt and his goſpel, declare unto you.

Let the common ſenſe of mankind judge here. Did not Matthew and John certainly know whether they had perſonally and familiarly converſed with Jeſus of Nazareth or not? whether he had choſen them for his conſtant attendants and apoſtles? whether they had ſeen him heal the ſick, diſpoſſeſs devils, and raiſe the dead? and whether they themſelves had received from him ſuch miraculous endowments, as they ſay he beſtowed upon them? did not they know whether he fell into the hands of his enemies, and was publicly put to death or not? did not John know whether he ſaw him expiring on the croſs or not? and whether he received from him a dying charge, which he records ch. xix. ver. 27? did he not know whether he ſaw him wounded in the ſide with a ſpear or not? and whether he did, or did not ſee that effuſion of blood and water, which was an infallible argument of his being really dead? Concerning which, it being ſo material a circumſtance, he adds, "He that ſaw it bare record; and he knoweth that

that he ſaith true." i. e. That it was a caſe in which he could not poſſibly be deceived. And with regard to Chriſt's reſurrection, did he not certainly know whether he ſaw our Lord again and again; and whether he handled his body, that he might be ſure it was not a mere phantom? what one circumſtance of his life could he certainly know, if he were miſtaken in this?

Did not Luke know whether he was in the ſhip with Paul, when that extraordinary wreck happened, by which they were thrown aſhore on the iſland of Malta? did he not know, whether, while they were lodged together in the governor's houſe, Paul miraculouſly healed one of the family, and many other diſeaſed perſons in the iſland, as he poſitively aſſerts that he did in Acts xxviii.

Did not Paul certainly know whether Chriſt appeared to him on the way to Damaſcus, or not? whether he was blind; and afterwards on the prayer of a fellow-diſciple, received his ſight? or, was that a circumſtance in which there could be room for miſtake? did he not know whether he received ſuch extraordinary revelations and extraordinary powers, as to be able by the impoſition of his hands, or, by the words of his mouth, to work miracles; and even to convey ſupernatural endowments to others?

To add no more: did not Peter know, whether he ſaw the glory of Chriſt's transfiguration, and heard that voice to which he ſo expreſly refers, when he ſays, "We have not followed cunningly deviſed fables, but were eye-witneſſes of his majeſty when there came ſuch a voice to him; and this voice we heard, 2d Peter, ch. i. 16. 18."

Now Matthew, John, Luke, Paul, and Peter, are by far the moſt conſiderable writers of the New Teſtament; and I am ſure, when you reflect on theſe particulars, you muſt own, that there are few hiſtorians, ancient or modern, that could ſo certainly judge of the truth of the facts which they have related. The reaſon why I have enlarged in ſtating ſo clear a caſe is, that it is the foundation of the whole argument: and that this branch of it alone cuts off Infidels from that refuge which they could generally chuſe, that of pleading the apoſtles were Enthuſiaſts; and leaves them ſilent, unleſs they will ſay that they were impoſtors. For you evidently ſee, that could we ſuppoſe theſe facts to be falſe, they could by no means pretend an involuntary miſtake; but muſt in the moſt criminal and aggravated ſenſe, as Paul himſelf expreſſes it, Cor. xv. 15. "Be found falſe witneſſes of God." But how unreaſonable it would be to charge him with ſo notorious a crime, will in part appear, if we conſider,

2. That

2. That the character of theſe writers, ſo far as we can judge by their works, ſeems to render them worthy of regard; and leaves no room to imagine that they intended to deceive us.

I ſhall not ſtay to ſhew at large, that they appear to have been perſons of natural ſenſe; and, at the time of their writing, of a compoſed mind. For I verily believe, no man that ever read the New Teſtament with attention, could believe that they were idiots or madmen. Let the diſcourſes of Chriſt in the Evangeliſts, of Peter and Paul in the Acts, as well as many paſſages in the Epiſtles, be peruſed, and I will venture to ſay, he who is not even charmed with them, muſt be a ſtranger to all the juſteſt rules of polite criticiſm. But he who ſuſpects that the writers wanted common ſenſe, muſt himſelf be moſt evidently deſtitute of it: and he who can ſuſpect they might poſſibly be diſtracted, muſt himſelf, in this inſtance at leaſt, be juſt as mad as he imagines them to have been.

It was neceſſary, however, juſt to touch upon this; becauſe, unleſs we are ſatisfied that a perſon be himſelf in what he writes, we cannot pretend to determine his character from his writings. Having premiſed this, let us in peruſing the New Teſtament, obſerve what evident marks it bears of ſimplicity and integrity, of piety and benevolence; upon which we will find them pleading the cauſe of its authors, with a reſiſtleſs, tho' gentle eloquence; and powerfully perſuading the mind, that men who were capable of writing ſo excellently well, are not, without the ſtrongeſt evidence, to be ſuſpected of acting ſo deteſtably ill, as we muſt ſuppoſe they did, if in this ſolemn manner they were carrying on an impoſture, in ſuch circumſtances as attended the caſe before us. For,

1. The manner in which they tell this amazing ſtory, is moſt happily adapted to gain our belief. For as they tell it with a great detail of circumſtances, which by no means could be prudent in legendary writers, becauſe it leaves ſo much the more room for confutation; ſo they alſo do it in the moſt eaſy and natural manner. There is no air of declamation and harangue; nothing that looks like artifice and deſign; no apologies, no encomiums, no characters, no reflections, no digreſſions; but the facts are recounted with great ſimplicity, juſt as they ſeem to have happened: and thoſe facts are left to ſpeak for themſelves in their great author. It is plain, that the reſt of theſe writers, as well as the apoſtle Paul, did not affect excellency of ſpeech, or flights of eloquence, as the phraſe ſignifies: but determined to know nothing, though amongſt the moſt learned and polite, ſave Jeſus Chriſt, and him crucified. A conduct which is the more to be admired, when we conſider how extraordinary a theme theirs was, and with what abundant variety of moſt pathetic declamation it would eaſily have

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furniſhed any common writer: ſo that one would really wonder how they could forbear it. But they rightly judged, that a vain affectation of ornament, when recording ſuch a ſtory as of their own knowledge, might perhaps have brought their ſincerity into queſtion; and ſo have rendered the croſs of Chriſt of no effect.

2. Their integrity does likewiſe evidently appear in the freedom with which they mention thoſe circumſtances, which might have expoſed their maſter and themſelves to the greateſt contempt, among prejudiced and inconſiderate men; ſuch as they knew they muſt generally expect to meet with. As to their maſter, they ſcruple not to own, that his country was infamous, his birth and education mean, and his life indigent; that he was moſt diſdainfully rejected by the rulers, and accuſed of ſabbath-breaking, blaſphemy, and ſedition; that he was reviled by the populace as a debauchee, a lunatic, and a demoniac: And at laſt, by the united rage of both rulers and people, was publicly executed as the vileſt of malefactors, with all imaginable circumſtances of ignominy, ſcorn, and abhorrence. Nor do they ſcruple to own, that terror and diſtreſs of ſpirit into which he was thrown by his ſufferings, though this was a circumſtance at which ſome of the heathens took the greateſt offence, as utterly unworthy ſo excellent and divine a perſon. As to themſelves, the apoſtles readily confeſs not only the meanneſs of their original employments and the ſcandals of their former life, but their prejudices, their follies, and their faults, after Chriſt had honoured them with ſo holy a calling. They acknowledge their lowneſs of apprehenſion under ſo excellent a teacher; their unbelief, their cowardice, their ambition, their raſh zeal, and their fooliſh contentions. So that, on the whole, they ſeem every where to forget that they are writing of themſelves; and appear not at all ſolicitous about their own reputation; but only that they might repreſent the matter juſt as it was, whether they went through honour or diſhonour, through evil report or good report. Nor is this all: for

3. It is certain that in their writings are the moſt genuine traces, not only of a plain and honeſt, but a moſt pious and devout, a moſt benevolent and generous diſpoſition. Theſe appear eſpecially in the epiſtolary parts of the New Teſtament, where indeed we ſhould moſt reaſonably expect to find them: and of theſe I may confidently affirm, that the greater progreſs any one has made in love to God, in zeal for his glory, in a compaſſionate and generous concern for the preſent and future happineſs of mankind; the more humble and candid, and temperate and pure he is, the more ardently he loves truth, and the more ſteadily he is determined to ſuffer the greateſt extremity in its defence. In a word, the more his heart is weaned from the preſent world, and the more it is fired with the proſpects of a glorious

immortality, the more pleaſure will he take in reading thoſe writings; the more will he reliſh the ſpirit which diſcovers itſelf in them; and find, that as face anſwers to face in water, ſo do the traces of piety and goodneſs which appear there, anſwer to thoſe which a good man feels in his own ſoul. Nay, I will add, that the warm and genuine workings of that excellent and holy temper which every where diſcovers itſelf in the New Teſtament, have for many ages been the moſt effectual method of ſpreading a ſpirit of virtue and piety in the world: and what of it is to be found in thoſe degenerate days, ſeems principally owing to theſe incomparable and truly divine writings.

Where then there are ſuch genuine marks of an excellent character, not only in laboured diſcourſes, but in epiſtolary writings, and thoſe ſometimes addreſſed to particular, and intimate friends, to whom the mind naturally opens itſelf with the greateſt freedom, ſurely no candid and equitable judge would lightly believe them to be all counterfeit; or would imagine, without very ſubſtantial proof, that perſons who breathe ſuch exalted ſentiments of virtue and piety, ſhould be guilty of any notorious wickedneſs; and in proportion to the degree of enormity and aggravation attending ſuch a ſuppoſed crime, it may juſtly be expected, that the evidence of their having really committed it ſhould be unanſwerably ſtrong and convincing.

Now it is very certain, on the principles laid down above, that if the teſtimony of the apoſtles was falſe, they muſt have acted as deteſtable and villainous a part as one can eaſily conceive. To be found, as the apoſtle with his uſual energy expreſſes it, falſe witneſſes of God, in any ſingle inſtance, and ſolemnly to declare to have done miraculouſly, what we, in our own conſciences know, was never done at all, would be an audacious degree of impiety, to which none but the moſt abandoned of mankind could arrive. Yet if the teſtimony of the apoſtles was falſe, as we have proved they could not be themſelves miſtaken in it, this muſt have been their caſe; and that not in one ſingle inſtance only, but in a thouſand. Their life muſt, in effect, be one continued and perpetual ſcene of perjury; and all the moſt ſolemn actions of it, (in which they were ſpeaking to God, or ſpeaking of him as God the father of Chriſt, from whom they received their commiſſion and powers) muſt be a moſt profane and daring inſult on all the acknowledged perfections of his nature.

And the inhumanity of ſuch a conduct would, on the whole, have been equal to its impiety. For it was deceiving men in their moſt important intereſts; and perſuading them to venture their whole future happineſs on the power and fidelity of one whom, on this ſuppoſition, they knew to have been an impoſtor, and juſtly to have ſuffered a capital puniſhment for his crimes.

It would have been great guilt to have given the hearts and devotions of men ſo wrong a turn, even though they had found magiſtrates ready to eſpouſe and eſtabliſh; yea, and to enforce the religion they taught. But, on the contrary, to labour to propagate it in the midſt of the moſt vigorous and ſevere oppoſition from them, muſt equally enhance the guilt and folly of the undertaking. For by this means they made themſelves acceſſory to the ruin of thouſands: and all the calamities which fell on ſuch proſelytes, or even on their remoteſt deſcendants, for the ſake of Chriſtianity, would be in a great meaſure chargeable on theſe firſt preachers of it. The blood of honeſt, yea, (and ſuppoſing them, as you muſt, to have been involuntarily deceived) of pious, worthy, and heroic perſons, who might otherwiſe have been the greateſt bleſſings to the public, would in effect be crying for vengeance againſt them. And the diſtreſſes of the widows and orphans, which thoſe martyrs might leave behind him, would join to ſwell the account.

So that, on the whole, the guilt of thoſe malefactors, who are from time to time the victims of public juſtice, even for robbery, murder, or treaſon, is ſmall when compared with that which we have now been ſuppoſing. And corrupt as human nature is, it appears to be utterly improbable, that twelve men ſhould be found, I will not ſay in one little nation, but even on the whole face of the earth, who could be capable of entering into ſo black a confederacy, on any terms whatſoever.

And now, in this view of the caſe, let us make a ſerious pauſe, and compare with it what we have juſt been ſaying of the character of the apoſtles of Jeſus, ſo far as an indifferent perſon could conjecture it from their writings; and then ſay, whether we can in our hearts believe them to have been theſe abandoned wretches, at once the reproach and aſtoniſhment of mankind? We cannot ſurely believe ſuch things of any, and much leſs of them, unleſs it ſhall appear, they were in ſome peculiar circumſtances of ſtrong temptation; and what thoſe circumſtances could be, it is difficult even for imagination to conceive.

But hiſtory is ſo far from ſuggeſting any unthought-of fact, to help our imagination on this head, that it bears ſtrongly the contrary way. And hardly any part of my work is eaſier than to ſhew,

3. That they were under no temptation to forge a ſtory of this kind, or to publiſh it to the world, knowing it to be falſe.

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They could reaſonably expect no gain, no reputation by it. But, on the contrary, ſuppoſing it an impoſture, they muſt, with the moſt ordinary ſhare of prudence, have foreſeen infamy and ruin, as the certain conſequence of attempting it. For the grand foundation of the ſcheme was, that Jeſus of Nazareth, who was crucified at Jeruſalem by the Jewiſh rulers, was the ſon of God, and the Lord of all things. I appeal to men's conſciences, whether this looks at all like the contrivances of artful and deſigning men.

It was evidently charging upon the princes of their country, the moſt criminal and aggravated murder: indeed, all things conſidered, the moſt enormous act of wickedneſs, which the ſun had ever ſeen. They might therefore depend upon it, that theſe rulers would immediately employ all their art and power to confute the teſtimony, and to deſtroy their perſons. Accordingly, one of them was preſently ſtoned, another quickly beheaded; and moſt of the reſt were ſcattered abroad into ſtrange cities (as we learn from the Acts of the Apoſtles) where they would be ſure to be received with great prejudices, raiſed againſt them amongſt the Jews by reports from Jeruſalem, and vaſtly ſtrengthened by their expectations of a temporal Meſſiah: Expectations which, as the apoſtles knew by their own experience, it was exceeding difficult to root out of men's minds: Expectations which would render the doctrine of Chriſt crucified, an inſeparable ſtumbling-block to the Jews.

Nor could they expect a much better reception amongſt the Gentiles, with whom their buſineſs was to perſuade them to renounce the gods of their anceſtors; and to depend on a perſon who had died the death of a malefactor and a ſlave, to perſuade them to forego the pompous idolatries in which they had been educated, and all the ſenſual indulgencies with which their religion (if it might be called a religion) was attended; to worſhip one viſible God through one Mediator, in the moſt plain and ſimple manner; and to receive a ſet of precepts, moſt directly calculated to controul and reſtrain not only the enormities of men's actions, but their irregularities of their hearts. A moſt difficult undertaking! And to engage them to this, they had no other arguments to bring, but ſuch as were taken from the views of an inviſible ſtate of happineſs or miſery, of which they aſſerted their crucified Jeſus to be the ſupreme diſpoſer, who ſhould another day diſpenſe, his bleſſings or his vengeance, as goſpel had been embraced or rejected. Now, could it be imagined, that men would eaſily be perſuaded, merely on the credit of their affirmation, or in compliance with their importunity, to believe things which to their prejudiced minds would appear ſo improbable, and to ſubmit to impoſitions to their corrupt inclinations ſo inſupportable? And if they could not

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perſuade them to it, what could the apoſtles then expect? What, but to be inſulted as fools or madmen by one ſort of people; and by another to be perſecuted with the moſt ſavage and outrageous cruelty, as blaſphemers of the Gods, as ſeducers of the people, and as diſturbers of the public peace? All which we know happened accordingly. Nay, they aſſure us, that their Lord had often warned them of it; and that they themſelves expected it; and thought it neceſſary to admoniſh their followers to expect it too. And it appears, that, far from drawing back upon that account, as they would ſurely have done if they had been governed by ſecular motives, they became ſo much the more zealous and courageous; and animated each other to reſiſt even to blood. Now as this is a great evidence of the integrity and piety of their character, and thus illuſtrates the former head, ſo it ſerves to the purpoſe now immediately in view, that is, it proves how improbable it is, that any perſon of common ſenſe ſhould engage in an impoſture, from which, as many have juſtly obſerved, they could, on their own principles, have nothing to expect but ruin in this world, and damnation in the next. When we therefore conſider and compare their character and circumſtances, it appears utterly improbable, on various accounts, that they would have attempted in this article to impoſe upon the world. But ſuppoſe that in conſequence of ſome unaccountable, as well as undiſcoverable frenzy, they had ventured on the attempt, it is eaſy to ſhow,

4. That humanly ſpeaking, they muſt quickly have periſhed in it; and their fooliſh cauſe muſt have died with them, without ever gaining any credit in the world.

One may venture to ſay this in general, on the principles which I before laid down. But it appears ſtill more evident, when we conſider the nature of the fact they aſſerted, in conjunction with the methods they took to engage men to believe it: methods, which had the apoſtles been impoſtors, muſt have had the moſt direct tendency to ruin both their ſcheme and themſelves.

1. Let us a little more particularly reflect on the nature of that grand fact; namely, the death, reſurrection, and exaltation of Chriſt: which, as I obſerved, was the great foundation of the chriſtian ſcheme, as firſt exhibited by the apoſtles. The reſurrection of a dead man and his aſcenſion into, and abode in the upper world, was ſo ſtrange a thing, that a thouſand objections would immediately be raiſed againſt it: and ſome extraordinary proof would juſtly be required as a balance to them. Now I wiſh that the rejecters of the goſpel would ſet themſelves to invent ſome hypotheſis, which ſhould have any appearance of probability, to ſhow how ſuch an amazing ſtory ſhould

ever gain credit in the world, if it had not ſome very convincing proof. Where and when could it firſt begin to be received? Was it in the ſame, or a ſucceeding age? Was it at Jeruſalem, the ſpot of ground on which it is ſaid to have happened? or in Greece, Italy, Aſia, or Africa? The ſcene and time may be changed, as one pleaſes; but the difficulty cannot.

Take it in a parallel inſtance: ſuppoſe twelve men in London were now to affirm, that a perſon executed there as a malefactor in a public manner, a month, or ſix weeks ago; or if you pleaſe, a year, or five or ten years ſince, for it is much the ſame; was a prophet ſent from God with extraordinary powers; that he was raiſed from the dead; that they converſed with him after his revival; and at laſt ſaw him taken up into heaven. Would their united teſtimony make them to be believed there? Or ſuppoſe them to diſperſe, and that one or two of them ſhould retire to Northampton, and go on ſtill more diſtant, ſuppoſe Leiceſter, Nottingham, or York, and tell their ſtory there: and that others were to carry it over to Paris, or Amſterdam, or to Vienna or Madrid; could they expect any more credit with us, or with them, or hope for any thing better than to be looked upon as lunatics, and treated as ſuch? And if they ſhould go into other places, and attemp- to mend their ſcheme, by ſaying their maſter was put to death an hundred or two hundred years ago, when there could be no hiſtorical evidence of it diſcovered, and no proof given but their own confident aſſertion: would they remove, or would they not rather increaſe the difficulty? Or would they in any of theſe caſes gain credit by the moſt dexterous tricks of legerdemain, of which you can ſuppoſe them maſters? Eſpecially, if they ſhould undertake, in conſequence of ſuch ſuppoſed facts, to engage men to renounce their religion in which they had been educated; to deny themſelves in their deareſt paſſions and moſt important worldly intereſts: and even probably to hazard their liberties and their lives, in dependance on a future reward, to be received into a place and ſtate, which no man living on earth had ever ſeen or known? You would readily allow this to be an inſuppoſable caſe: and why ſhould you ſuppoſe it to have happened ſixteen or ſeventeen hundred years ago? You may aſſure yourſelves that the reaſon and the paſſions of mankind were then as ſtrong as they are now. But let us a little more particularly conſider,

2. The manner in which the apoſtles undertook to prove the truth of their teſtimony to this fact: and it will evidently appear, that inſtead of confirming their ſcheme, it muſt have been ſufficient utterly to have overthrown it, had it been itſelf the moſt probable impoſture that the wit of man could ever have contrived. It is evident, they did not merely aſſert that they had ſeen miracles wrought by this Jeſus, but that he had endow-

ed themſelves with a variety of miraculous powers. And theſe they undertook to diſplay, not in ſuch idle and uſeleſs tricks as ſlight of hand might perform; but in ſuch ſolid and important works, as appeared worthy of a divine interpoſition, and entirely ſuperior to human power: reſtoring as they pretend, ſight to the blind, ſoundneſs to lepers, activity to the lame, and in ſome inſtances, life to the dead. Nor were theſe things undertaken in a corner, in a circle of friends or dependents; nor were they ſaid to be wrought on ſuch as might be ſuſpected of being confederates in the fraud: but they were done often in the public ſtreets, in the ſight of enemies, on the perſons of ſuch as were utter ſtrangers to the apoſtles; but ſometimes well known to neighbours and ſpectators, as having long laboured under theſe calamities, to human ſkill utterly incurable. Would impoſtors have made ſuch pretenſions as theſe? Or if they had, muſt they not immediately have been expoſed and ruined?

Nor is there any room at all to object, that perhaps the apoſtles might not undertake to do theſe things on the ſpot, but only aſſert that they had done them elſewhere: for even then, it would have been impoſſible that they ſhould have gained credit: and they would have ſeemed the leſs credible, on account of ſuch a pretence. Whatever appearances there might have been of gravity, integrity, and piety, in the converſation of Peter, for inſtance; very few, eſpecially few that had known but little of him, would have taken it upon his word, that he ſaw Jeſus raiſe Lazarus from the dead at Bethany: but fewer yet would have believed it upon his affirmation, had it been ever ſo ſolemn, that he had himſelf raiſed Dorcas at Joppa, unleſs he had done ſome extraordinary work before them, correſpondent at leaſt, if not equal to that. One may eaſily think of invincible objections, which otherwiſe might have been made: and undoubtedly the more ſuch aſſertions had been multiplied, every new perſon, ſcene, and fact had been an additional advantage given to the enemy, to have detected and confuted the whole ſcheme, which Peter and his aſſociates had thus endeavoured to eſtabliſh.

But to come ſtill cloſer to the point: If the New Teſtament be genuine, as I have already proved it, then it is certain, that the apoſtles pretend to have wrought miracles in the very preſence of thoſe, to whom their writings were addreſſed: nay more, they profeſs likewiſe to have conferred thoſe miraculous gifts in ſome conſiderable degrees on others, even on the very perſons to whom they write: and they appeal to their conſciences with regard to the truth of it. And could there poſſibly be room for deluſion here? It is exceedingly remarkable to this purpoſe, that Paul makes this appeal to the Corinthians, and to the Galatians, when amongſt them were

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ſome perſons diſaffected to him, who were taking all opportunities to ſink his character, and deſtroy his influence. And could they have wiſhed for a better opportunity than ſuch an appeal? An appeal, which, had not the fact it ſuppoſed been certain, far from recovering thoſe that were wavering in their eſteem, muſt have been ſufficient utterly to diſguſt his moſt cordial and ſteady friends. And the ſame remark may be applied to the advices and reproofs which the apoſtle there gives, relating to the uſe and abuſe of their ſpiritual gifts: which had been moſt notoriouſly abſurd, and even ridiculous, had not the Chriſtians, to whom he wrote, been really poſſeſſed of them. And theſe gifts were ſo plainly ſupernatural, that as it has been often obſerved, if it be allowed, that miracles can prove a divine revelation, and that the firſt Epiſtle to the Corinthians be genuine (of which by the way there is at leaſt as pregnant evidences, as that any part of the New Teſtament is ſo) then it follows by a ſure and eaſy conſequence, that Chriſtianity is true. Nevertheleſs, other arguments are not to be forgot in this ſurvey. And therefore, as I have proved under this head, that had the teſtimony of the apoſtles been falſe, it is not to be imagined, that they could have gained credit at all; and eſpecially when they had put the proof of their cauſe on ſuch a footing, as we are ſure they did. I am now to ſhow,

5. That it is certain in fact, that the apoſtles did gain early credit, and ſucceeded in a moſt wonderful manner: from whence it will follow, that their teſtimony was true.

That the apoſtles did indeed gain credit in the world, is evident from what I before offered in order to prove the early prevalence of Chriſtianity in it, and this may be farther confirmed from many paſſages in the New Teſtament. And here I inſiſt not ſo much on expreſs hiſtorical teſtimonies, though ſome of them are very remarkable; eſpecially that of the brethren at Jeruſalem, who ſpeak of many myriads of believing Jews aſſembled at the feaſt of Pentecoſt, mentioned in chap. xxi. of the Acts. But I argue from the Epiſtles written to ſeveral churches, which plainly prove, that there were congregations of chriſtians in Rome, Corinth, Epheſus, Coloſſe, Theſſalonica, Philippi, Laodicea, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Crete, Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Aſia, and Bythinia, and many other places: Inſomuch, that one of the apoſtles could ſay, "That Chriſt had ſo wrought by him to make the Gentiles obedient *not only* in word *or profeſſion*, *but* in deed *too*; that from Jeruſalem, even round about unto Illyrium, he had fully preached the goſpel of Chriſt:" or as the word imports, "had accompliſhed" the purpoſes of it. And there is a great deal of reaſon, both from the nature of the thing, and from the

teſtimony of ancient hiſtory, to believe, that others of the apoſtles had conſiderable ſucceſs elſewhere. So that St. Paul might with reaſon apply to them and their doctrine, what is originally ſpoken of the luminaries of heaven, and the inſtructions they communicate, "their ſound is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world."

So great was the number of thoſe who were made proſelytes to chriſtianity by the preaching of the apoſtles. And we have all imaginable reaſon to believe, that there were none of all theſe proſelytes, but what were fully perſuaded of the truth of the teſtimony they bore: for otherwiſe no imaginable reaſon can be given for their entering themſelves into ſuch a profeſſion. The apoſtles had no ſecular terrors to affright their proſelytes; no ſecular rewards to bribe them; no dazzling eloquence to enchant them: on the contrary, all theſe were in a powerful manner pleading againſt the apoſtles: yet their teſtimony was received; and their new converts were ſo thoroughly ſatisfied with the evidence which they gave them of their miſſion, that they encountered great perſecutions, and cheerfully ventured eſtate, liberty, and life itſelf, on the truth of the facts they aſſerted: as plainly appears from many paſſages in the Epiſtles, which none can think the apoſtles would ever have writ, if theſe firſt chriſtians had not been in a perſecuted condition.

Nor will it ſignify any thing to object, that moſt of theſe converts were perſons of a low rank and ordinary education, who therefore might be more eaſily impoſed upon than others. For (not to mention Sergius Paulius, Dionyſius the Areopagite, or the domeſtics of Cæſar's houſhold, with others of ſuperior ſtation in life) it is ſufficient to call to mind, that the apoſtles did not put their cauſe on the iſſue of laboured arguments, in which the populace might quickly have been entangled and loſt; but on ſuch plain facts as they might judge of as eaſily and ſurely as any others: indeed, on what they themſelves ſaw, and in part too on what they felt.

Now I apprehend this might be ſufficient to bring the matter to a ſatisfactory concluſion. It has been ſhewn, that as there is no reaſon to believe, that the apoſtles who certainly knew the truth, would have attempted a fraud of this kind.—So if they had attempted it, they could not poſſibly have ſucceeded: nevertheleſs they did ſucceed in a very remarkable manner. Whence it plainly follows, that what they teſtified was true.

6. That admitting the facts which they teſtified concerning Chriſt to be true, then it was reaſonable for their co-temporaries, and is reaſonable for

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us to receive the Goſpel, which they have tranſmitted to us as a divine revelation.

The great things they aſſerted was, that Jeſus was the Chriſt; and that he was proved to be ſo, by prophecies accompliſhed in him, and by miracles wrought by him, and by others in his name. Let us attend to each of theſe, and I am perſuaded that we ſhall find them no contemptible arguments; but muſt be forced to acknowledge, that the premiſes being eſtabliſhed, the concluſion moſt eaſily and neceſſarily follows. And this concluſion, "that Jeſus is the Chriſt," taken in all its extent, is an abſtract of the Goſpel revelation; and therefore is ſometimes put for the whole of it.

The apoſtles, eſpecially when diſputing with the Jews, frequently argued from the prophecies of the Old Teſtament, in which they ſay many things were expreſsly foretold, which were moſt literally and exactly fulfilled in Jeſus of Nazareth. Now, greatly to the evidence, confirmation, and advantage of chriſtianity, ſo it is that theſe prophecies are to this day extant in the original language: and this in the hands of a people moſt implacably averſe to the goſpel. So that an attentive reader may ſtill, in a great meaſure, ſatisfy himſelf, as to the validity of the argument drawn from them.

On ſearching theſe ancient and important records, we find not only in the general, that God intended to raiſe up for his people an illuſtrious deliverer, who, among other glorious titles, is ſometimes called the Meſſiah, or the anointed one: But we are more particularly told, that this great event ſhould happen before the government ceaſed in the the tribe of Judah, while the ſecond temple was ſtanding; and a little before its deſtruction, about four hundred and ninety years after a command given to rebuild Jeruſalem; which was probably iſſued out in the ſeventh year of Artaxerxes Longimanus, or at leaſt within a few years before, or after it. 'Tis predicted that he ſhould be of the ſeed of Abraham, born of a virgin, of the houſe of David, in the town of Bethlehem; that he ſhould be anointed with an extraordinary effuſion of the divine Spirit; in virtue of which he ſhould not only be a perfect and illuſtrious example of univerſal holineſs and goodneſs, but ſhould alſo perform many extraordinary and beneficial miracles: Nevertheleſs, that, for want of external pomp and ſplendor, he ſhould be rejected and inſulted by the Jews, and afterwards be cut off and ſlain by them. It is added, that he ſhould ariſe from the dead, before his body ſhould be corrupted in the grave: and ſhould be received up to heaven, and there ſeated at the right hand of God: from whence he

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ſhould in a wonderful manner pour out his ſpirit on his followers; in conſequence of which, though the body of the Jewiſh people periſhed in their obſtinate oppoſition to him, yet the Gentiles ſhould be brought to the knowledge of the true God, and a kingdom eſtabliſhed amongſt them, which from ſmall beginnings ſhould ſpread itſelf to the end of the earth, and continue to the remoteſt ages.

Beſides theſe moſt material circumſtances, there were ſeveral others relating to him, which were either expreſsly foretold, or at leaſt hinted at: all which, with thoſe already mentioned, had ſo evident an accompliſhment in Jeſus (allowing the truth of the facts which the apoſtles teſtified concerning him) that we have no reaſon to wonder that they ſhould receive the word with all readineſs who ſearched the ſcriptures daily, whether theſe things were ſo predicted there, as the apoſtles affirmed. For I am perſuaded that no wiſe and religious perſon could imagine, that God would permit an impoſtor to ariſe, in whom ſo great a variety of predictions, delivered by ſo many different perſons, and in ſo many diſtant ages, ſhould have an exact accompliſhment.

When the apoſtles were preaching to heathens, it is indeed true, that they generally waved the argument from prophecy, becauſe they were not ſo capable judges of it. But when they inſiſt on another, which might as ſoon captivate their belief, and as juſtly vindicate it; I mean "the miracles performed by Chriſt, and theſe commiſſioned and influenced by him;" many of theſe were of ſuch a nature, as not to admit of any artifice or deceit: eſpecially that moſt ſignal one of his reſurrection from the dead, which I may call a miracle performed by, as well as upon Chriſt; becauſe he ſo expreſsly declares, that he had himſelf a power to reſume his life at pleaſure. The apoſtles well knew, that this was a fact of ſuch a nature that they who believed this, would never doubt of the reſt. They often therefore ſingle this out, and lay the whole ſtreſs of their cauſe upon it. This they proved to be true by their own teſtimony miraculouſly confirmed; and in proving this, they eſtabliſhed Chriſtianity on an impregnable rock. For I may ſafely refer it to any to judge, whether it is an imaginable thing, that God ſhould raiſe the dead body of an impoſtor; eſpecially when he had ſolemnly appealed to ſuch a reſurrection, as a grand proof of his miſſion, and had expreſsly fixed the very day on which it was to happen.

I perſuade myſelf that by all this 'tis evident, that they who on the apoſtle's teſtimony believed, that the prophecies of the Old Teſtament were accompliſhed in Jeſus, and that God bore witneſs to him by miracles, and raiſed

raiſed him from the dead, had abundant reaſon to believe, that the doctrine which Chriſt taught was divine, and his goſpel a revelation from heaven. And if they had reaſon to admit this concluſion, then it is plain that we, who have ſuch ſatisfactory evidences on the one hand, that the teſtimony of the apoſtles was credible; and on the other, that this was the ſubſtance of it, have reaſon alſo to admit this grand inference from it, and embrace the goſpel as a faithful ſaying, and as well worthy of all acceptation. This is the thing I have attempted to prove; and here I ſhould finiſh the argument, were it not from the confirmation it may receive from ſome additional conſiderations, which could not properly be introduced under any of the preceding heads. I therefore add

7. In the laſt place, That the truth of the goſpel has received farther and very conſiderable confirmation, from what has happened in the world ſince it was firſt publiſhed.

And here I muſt deſire the reader to conſider on the one hand, what God has been doing to eſtabliſh it; and on the other, the methods which its enemies have been taking to deſtroy it.

1. Conſider, what God has been doing to confirm the goſpel ſince its firſt publication? and I will venture to aſſert, that it will prove a farther evidence of its divine original.

I might here argue at large, from its ſurprizing propagation in the world; —from the miraculous powers with which not only the apoſtles, but ſucceeding preachers of the goſpel, and other converts, were endowed;— from the accompliſhment of prophecies recorded in the Old Teſtament; —and from the preſervation of the Jews as a diſtinct people, notwithſtanding the various difficulties and perſecutions through which they have paſſed.

I might particularly urge, in confirmation of the truth of Chriſtianity, the wonderful ſucceſs with which it was attended, and the ſurprizing propagation of the goſpel in the world.

I have therefore endeavoured, under a former head, to ſhew you, that the goſpel met with ſo favourable a reception in the world, as evidently proved, that its firſt publiſhers were capable of producing ſufficient evidence of its truth; evidence abſolutely incompatible with impoſture. But I ſhall now carry this remark farther, and aſſert, that, conſidering the circumſtances of the caſe, it is amazing, that even truth itſelf, under ſo many

many diſadvantages, ſhould have ſo illuſtrious a triumph; and that its wonderful ſucceſs ſo evidently proves ſuch an extraordinary interpoſition of the Almighty in its favour, as may juſtly be called a miraculous atteſtation of it.

There was not only *one of a family*, or *two of a city*, *taken and brought to Zion*; but *the Lord ſo haſtened it, in its* appointed *time*, that *a little one became a thouſand, and a ſmall one a ſtrong nation.* And as the apoſtles themſelves were honoured with very remarkable ſucceſs, ſo this divine ſeed was propagated ſo faſt in the next age, that Pliny teſtifies, "He found the heathen temples in Achaia almoſt deſerted:" and Tertullian afterwards boaſts, "That all places, except thoſe temples, were filled with chriſtians; ſo that were they only to withdraw, cities and provinces would be depopulated." Nor did the goſpel only triumph thus within the boundaries of the Roman empire; for long before Tertullian was born, Juſtin Martyr, in his dialogue with Trypho the Jew, which ſeems to have been written not much above an hundred years after Chriſt's death, declares, "That there was no nation of men, whether Greeks or Barbarians, not "excepting theſe ſavages that wandered in clans from one region to ano-"ther, and had no fixed habitation, who had not learned to offer prayers "and thankſgivings to the father and maker of all, in the name of Jeſus "who was crucified."

Now how is it poſſible to account for ſuch a ſcene as this, but by ſaying the hand of the Lord was with the firſt preachers of the goſpel, and therefore ſuch multitudes believed, and turned to the Lord? How was it poſſible for ſo ſmall a fountain to have ſwelled immediately into a mighty river, and even have covered the face of the whole earth, if it had not ſprung from the ſanctuary of God, and been rendered triumphant by his almighty arm?

Had this new religion, ſo directly contrary to all the prejudices of education, been contrived to ſooth men's vices, to countenance their errors, to defend their ſuperſtitions, or to promote their ſecular intereſts, we might eaſily have accounted for its prevalence in the world. Had its preachers been profound philoſophers, or polite and faſhionable orators, many might have been charmed, at leaſt for a while, to follow them: or had the princes and potentates of the earth declared themſelves its patrons, and armed their legions for its defence and propagation, multitudes might have been terrified into the profeſſion, though not a ſoul could by ſuch means have been rationally perſuaded to the uſe of it. But without ſome ſuch advantages as theſe, we can hardly conceive, how any new religion ſhould

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ſo ſtrangely prevail; even though it had crept into the world in its darkeſt ages, and the moſt barbarous countries; and though it had been gradually propoſed in the moſt artful manner, with the fineſt veil induſtriouſly drawn over every part, which might at firſt have given diſguſt to the beholder.

But every one knows, that the very reverſe of all this was the caſe of chriſtianity. It is abundantly evident, from the apparent conſtitution of the religion of Jeſus, that the luſts and errors, the ſuperſtitions and intereſts of carnal men would immediately riſe up againſt it as a moſt irreconcileable enemy. It is known that the learning and wit of the Greeks and Romans were early employed to ridicule and obſtruct its progreſs. It is known, that as all the herd of heathen deities were to be diſcarded, the prieſts, who ſubſiſted by the ſuperſtitious worſhip paid them, muſt in intereſt find themſelves obliged to oppoſe it. It is known that the princes of the earth drew the ſword againſt it, and armed torments and death for the deſtruction of its followers. And yet it triumphed over all, though publiſhed in ages and places celebrated for learning and elegance; and propoſed, not in an ornamental and artificial manner, but with the utmoſt plainneſs; the doctrines of the croſs being always advanced as its grand fundamentals, though ſo notorious a ſtumbling-block both to the Jews and Gentiles; and the abſolute neceſſity, not only of embracing chriſtianity, but alſo of renouncing all idol worſhip, being inſiſted on immediately and in the ſtrongeſt terms, though it muſt make the goſpel appear the moſt ſingular and unſociable religion that had ever been taught in the world.

Had one of the wits or politicians of theſe ages ſeen the apoſtles, and a few other plain men, who had been educated among the loweſt of the people, as moſt of the firſt teachers of Chriſtianity were, going out armed with nothing but faith, truth, and goodneſs, to encounter the power of princes, the bigottry of prieſts, the learning of philoſophers, the rage of the populace, and the prejudices of all; how would he have derided the attempt and ſaid with Sanballat, *What will theſe feeble Jews do?* But had he ſeen the event, ſurely he muſt have owned, with the Egyptian Magi, in a far leſs illuſtrious miracle, that it was the finger of God; and might juſtly have fallen on his face, even among thoſe whom he had inſulted, with an humble acknowledgment *that God was in them of a truth.*

I might here farther urge thoſe miracles which were wrought in confirmation of the chriſtian doctrine, for a conſiderable time after the death of the apoſtles. The moſt ſignal and beſt atteſted among theſe was the diſpoſſeſing of devils, whom God ſeems to have permitted to rage with unuſual violence

about thoſe times, that his ſon's triumph over them might be ſo much the more remarkable; and that the old ſerpent might be taken in his own craftineſs. 'Tis well known, that more than two hundred years after the death of Chriſt, ſome of the moſt celebrated defenders of the goſpel, which the church has in any age produced, I mean Tertullian and Minutius Felix, do not only challenge any of their heathen enemies and perſecutors, to bring them a demoniac, engaging at the hazard of their lives to oblige the evil ſpirit, in the name and by the authority of Chriſt, to quit his poſſeſſion; but they do alſo appeal to it as a fact publickly known, that thoſe who were agitated by ſuch ſpirits, ſtood terrified and amazed in the preſence of a chriſtian; and that their pretended gods were compelled then to confeſs themſelves devils.

I wave the teſtimonies of ſome later writers in the chriſtian church, leſt the credulity of their temper, joined with the circumſtances attending ſome of the facts they record, ſhould furniſh out objections againſt their teſtimony. Though I think we cannot, without great injuſtice to the character of the learned and pious Auguſtin, ſuſpect the truth of ſome amazing facts of this kind, which he has atteſted as of his own perſonal and certain knowledge.

Nor muſt I forget to mention the accompliſhment of ſeveral prophecies, recorded in the New Teſtament, as a further confirmation given by God to the goſpel.

The moſt eminent and ſignal inſtance under this head, is that of our Lord's prediction concerning the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, as recorded by St. Matthew in his twenty-fourth chapter. The tragical hiſtory of it is moſt circumſtantially deſcribed by Joſephus, a Jewiſh prieſt, who was an eye-witneſs of it; and the deſcription which he has given of this ſad calamity ſo exactly correſponds with the prophecy, that one would have thought, had we not known the contrary, that it had been written by a chriſtian on purpoſe to illuſtrate it. And one can never enough admire that ſeries of amazing providences, by which the author was preſerved from moſt imminent danger, that he might leave us that invaluable treaſure which his writings contain.

We have no need of further evidence than we find in him, of the exact accompliſhment of what was propheſied concerning the deſtruction of Jeruſalem. But our Lord had alſo foretold the long continued deſolation of the temple. And I cannot forbear mentioning the aweful ſanction which was given to that part of the prediction. For it is well known, that

a heathen hiſtorian has aſſured us, that when Julian the apoſtate, in deliberate contempt of that prediction, ſolemnly and reſolutely undertook to rebuild it, his impious deſign was fruſtrated miraculouſly again and again; and the workmen conſumed by globes of fire which broke out from the foundations.

The prediction of St. Paul concerning the man of ſin, and the apoſtacy of the latter times, is alſo well worthy of our remark; and though a great deal of the book of Revelation be ſtill concealed under a dark veil, yet the diviſion of the Roman empire into ten kingdoms; the uſurpation, perſecution, and idolatry of the Romiſh church, and the long duration of the papal power, with ſeveral other extraordinary events, which no human prudence could have foreſeen, and which have happened long ſince the publication of that book, are ſo clearly foretold there, that I cannot but look on that part of ſcripture as an invaluable treaſure: and I think it not at all improbable, that the more viſible accompliſhment of ſome of its other prophecies may be a great means of reviving the chriſtian cauſe, which is at preſent ſo much on the decline.

The preſervation of the Jews, as a diſtinct people, is another particular under this head, which well deſerves our attentive regard.

'Tis plain that they are vaſtly numerous, notwithſtanding all the ſlaughter and deſtruction of this people in former and latter ages. They are diſperſed among various moſt diſtant nations, and particularly in theſe parts of the world where chriſtianity is profeſſed; and though they are expoſed to great hatred and contempt, on account of their different faith, and in moſt places ſubjected to civil incapacities, if not to unchriſtian ſeverities; yet they are ſtill moſt obſtinately tenacious of their religion: which is the more wonderful, as their fathers were ſo prone to apoſtatize from it; and as moſt of them ſeem to be utter ſtrangers entirely to piety or humanity, and pour the greateſt contempt on the moral precepts of their own law, while they are ſo attached to the ceremonial inſtitutions of it, troubleſome and inconvenient as they are. Now let us ſeriouſly reflect, what an evident hand of Providence is here, that by their diſperſion, preſervation and adherence to their religion, it ſhould come to paſs, that chriſtians ſhould daily ſee the accompliſhment of many remarkable prophecies concerning this people; and that we ſhould always have amongſt us ſuch a crowd of unexceptionable witneſſes to the truth of thoſe ancient Hebrew records, on which ſo much of the evidence of the goſpel depends: records which are many of them ſo full to the purpoſe for which we alledge them, that, as a celebrated writer very well obſerves, "Had the whole body of the Jewiſh

nation been converted to chriſtianity, men would certainly have thought they had been forged by chriſtians; and have looked upon them in the ſame light with the prophecies of the Sybils, as made many years after the events which they pretend to foretel." And to add no more here, the preſervation of the Jews, as a diſtinct people, evidently leaves room for the accompliſhment of thoſe Old and New Teſtament prophecies, which relate to their national converſion and reſtoration: whereas that would be impoſſible in itſelf or at leaſt impoſſible to be known, if they were promiſcuouſly blended with other people. On the whole, 'tis ſuch a ſcene in the conduct of providence, as I am well aſſured, cannot be paralleled in the hiſtory of any other nation upon earth; and affords a moſt obvious and important argument in favour of the goſpel.

Thus has chriſtianity been farther confirmed, ſince its publication, by what God has done to eſtabliſh it. It only remains that we conſider,

2. What confirmation it receives from the methods which its enemies have taken to deſtroy it.

And theſe have generally been, either perſecution, or falſhood, or cavilling at ſome particulars in the revelation, without entering into the grand argument on which it is built, and fairly debating what is offered in its defence. Now, who would not think the better of a cauſe for being thus attacked?

At firſt 'tis known, that the profeſſors, and eſpecially the preachers of the goſpel, were ſeverely perſecuted. In every city bonds and impriſonment awaited them. As ſoon as ever the apoſtles began to preach Jeſus and his reſurrection, the Jewiſh rulers laid hold on them; and having confined and ſcourged them, ſtrictly prohibited their ſpeaking any more in that name. A little while after Stephen was murdered; and afterwards James and ſome other of the apoſtles. Now certainly ſuch a conduct evidently betrayed a conſciouſneſs that they were not able to anſwer the apoſtles, and to ſupport their own cauſe by the fair methods of reaſon and argument, to which, ſo far as the hiſtory informs us, they made no pretence: but attempted to bear them down by dint of authority, and to ſilence them by brutal force.

It would be endleſs to attempt ſhewing particularly how theſe unrighteous methods were purſued in ſucceeding ages and diſtant countries. The ſavage cruelties of Nero to theſe innocent and holy men, were ſuch as raiſed the pity even of their enemies. Yet this was one of the leaſt extenſive and

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deſtructive of the ten general perſecutions, which aroſe in the Roman empire, beſides ſeveral others in the neighbouring countries, of which eccleſiaſtical hiſtory informs us.

Theſe early enemies of the goſpel added falſhood and ſlander to their inhumanities. They endeavoured to murder the reputations of chriſtians, as well as their perſons; and were not aſhamed to repreſent them as haters of the whole human ſpecies, for no imaginable reaſon, but that they would not aſſociate themſelves in their idolatrous worſhip: but with regard to charity and truth, were ſtrongly bearing teſtimony againſt it. Nay, they charged them with human ſacrifices, inceſt, idolatry, and all the crimes, for which themſelves, and their fooliſh gods, were indeed juſtly deteſtable: but from which the chriſtians knew how to vindicate themſelves, highly to their own honour, and to the everlaſting reproach of theſe malignant and peſtilent accuſers. And they have not failed to do it in many noble apologies, which through the divine providence are tranſmitted to us, and are incomparably the moſt valuable of any ancient uninſpired writings.

Such were the infamous, the ſcandalous methods, by which the goſpel was oppoſed in the earlieſt ages of the church; and I cannot forbear adding, that the meaſures more lately taken, to ſubvert it, eſpecially among ourſelves, ſeem to me rather to reflect a glory on it. The unhappy enemies of the goſpel of the Son of God, have been told again and again, that we put the proof of it on plain fact. They themſelves do not, and cannot deny, that it prevailed early in the world, as we have ſhewn at large. There muſt have been ſome man or body of men who firſt introduced it; they generally confeſs, that Chriſt and his apoſtles were the perſons, and theſe apoſtles, on whoſe teſtimony what we know of Chriſt chiefly depends, muſt have been enthuſiaſts or impoſtors, if their teſtimony was falſe. Now which of theſe ſchemes will the unbelievers take? It ſeems, that the deiſts of the preſent age fix on neither, as being ſecretly conſcious they can ſupport neither; but they content themſelves with cavilling at ſome circumſtances attending the revelation, without daring to encounter its grand evidence; that is, they have been labouriouſly attempting to prove it to be improbable, or abſurd, to ſuppoſe that to have been, which nevertheleſs plainly appears to have been fact. One of them moſt weakly and ſophiſtically attempts to prove, in defiance of the common ſenſe of mankind, that *the light of nature is a perfect rule*, and therefore, that all revelation is needleſs and indeed impoſſible. Another diſguiſes the miracles of Chriſt by falſe and fooliſh repreſentations of them, and then ridicules them as idle tales. A third takes a great deal of fruitleſs pains to ſhew, that ſome prophecies, referred to in the New Teſtament, are capable of another ſenſe, different from that in which the apoſtles have

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taken them. Theſe things have been ſet in a very artful and fallacious light by perſons, whoſe names will, perhaps, be tranſmitted to poſterity, with the infamous glory of having been leaders in the cauſe of infidelity; but not a man of them undertakes to aſcertain the grand fact. Nay, they generally take no more notice of the poſitive evidences by which it is even demonſtrated, than if they had never heard it propoſed; though they cavil at incidental paſſages in thoſe books in which it is moſt clearly ſtated. And as for what they have urged, though perhaps ſome who were before weary of Chriſtianity, may have taken occaſion to reject it; and others, for want of conſulting the anſwers to them, may have been unwarily enſnared; yet the examination of theſe points has been greatly for the honour and vindication of the truth, which ſeems on this occaſion to have been ſet in a clearer and ſtronger light than ever, at leaſt in theſe latter ages.

The cauſe of chriſtianity has greatly gained by debate, and the goſpel comes like fine gold out of the furnace, which the more it is tried, the more it is approved. I own, the defenders of the goſpel have appeared with very different degrees of ability for the work; nor could it be otherwiſe among ſuch numbers of them: but on the whole, though the patrons of infidelity have been maſters of ſome wit, humour, and addreſs, as well as of a moderate ſhare of learning, and generally much more than a moderate ſhare of aſſurance; yet ſo great is the force of truth, that (unleſs we may except thoſe writers who have unhappily called for the aid of the civil magiſtrate in the controverſy) I cannot recollect that I have ſeen any defence of the goſpel, which has not, on the whole, been ſufficient to eſtabliſh it, notwithſtanding all the ſophiſtical arguments of its ſubtile antagoniſts.

This is an obſervation that is continually gaining new ſtrength, as new aſſaults are made upon the goſpel; and I cannot forbear ſaying, that, as if it were by a kind of judicial infatuation, ſome who have diſtinguiſhed themſelves in the wretched cauſe of infidelity, have been permitted to fall into ſuch groſs miſrepreſentations, ſuch ſenſeleſs inconſiſtencies, ſuch palpable falſhoods, and in a word, into ſuch various and malignant *ſuperfluity of naughtineſs*, that, to a wiſe and pious mind, they muſt appear like thoſe venomous creatures, which are ſaid to carry an antidote in their bowels againſt their own poiſon. Nay, ſome of them have even anſwered their own objections, particularly Lord Bolingbroke, who has given up ſeveral of the deiſtical objections, and even acknowledged the divine original of the goſpel; for he aſſerts, "That no religion ever appeared in the world, "whoſe natural tendency was ſo much directed to promote the peace and "happineſs of mankind," vol. iv. pag. 281, 282. He declares, that "No "ſyſtem can be more ſimple and plain than that of natural religion as it "ſtands

" ſtands in the goſpel," vol. iv. p. 290, 292. He avers, that " he will not " ſay, that the belief that Jeſus was the Meſſiah is the only article of be- " lief neceſſary to make men chriſtians. There are other things doubtleſs " contained in the revelation he made of himſelf, dependant on, and re- " lative to this article, without the belief of which, I ſuppoſe our chri- " ſtianity would be very defective. But this I ſay, that the ſyſtem of re- " ligion which Chriſt publiſhed, and his evangeliſts recorded, is a com- " plete ſyſtem of all the purpoſes of religion, natural and revealed. It " contains all the duties of the former, it inforces the whole law of faith " by promiſing rewards and threatening puniſhments, which he declares " he will diſtribute when he comes to judge the world," vol. iv. p. 314. He alloweth, that " the goſpel is in all caſes one continued leſſon of the ſtrict- " eſt morality, of juſtice, of benevolence, and of univerſal charity," vol. iv. p. 188. He profeſſeth a great concern for true Chriſtianity in oppoſition to theology, and ſays, that " genuine chriſtianity was taught of God," ibid. p. 349. And not to multiply paſſages to this purpoſe, he pronounces, that " the chriſtian ſyſtem of faith and practice was revealed by God himſelf, " and it is abſurd and impious to aſſert, that the divine Logos revealed " it incompletely or imperfectly. Its ſimplicity and plainneſs ſhewed, " that it was deſigned to be the religion of mankind, and manifeſted " likewiſe the divinity of its original." vol. iii. p. 451. After reading theſe quotations, and a great variety of others, which might be produced from his Lordſhip's writings, the reader may eaſily judge what religion has to fear from this noble writer's arguments, if his whole works are read with attention; and I will venture to aſſert, that he has himſelf entirely anſwered his own objections.

Thus have I given the reader a brief view of the chief arguments in proof of chriſtianity; and the ſum of the whole is this:

The goſpel is probable in theory; as conſidering the nature of God, and the circumſtances of mankind, there was reaſon to hope a revelation might be given: and if any were given, we ſhould naturally apprehend its internal evidence would be ſuch as that of the goſpel is, and its external ſuch as it is ſaid to be. But it is alſo true in fact; for Chriſtianity was early profeſſed, as it was firſt introduced by Jeſus of Nazareth, whoſe life and doctrines were publiſhed by his immediate attendants; whoſe books are ſtill preſerved in the original language, and, in the main are faithfully tranſlated into our own; ſo that the books of the New Teſtament now in uſe, may be depended upon as written by the perſons whoſe names they bear. And admitting this, the truth of the goſpel follows by a train of very eaſy conſequences; for the authors certainly knew the truth of the facts they relate;

relate; and conſidering what appears in their character and circumſtances, we can never believe they would have attempted to deceive us; or if they had, they could not have gained credit in the world; but they did gain it in a very remarkable manner; therefore the facts they atteſted are true: and the truth of the goſpel evidently follows from the certainty of thoſe facts, and is greatly confirmed by what has happened in the world ſince the firſt publication of it.

This is the ſum of what I flatter myſelf I have ſufficiently proved; and ſhall now conclude what I have to ſay on this ſubject, with a few words by way of reflection.

1. Let us gratefully acknowledge the divine goodneſs, in favouring us with ſo excellent a revelation, and confirming it to us by ſuch ample evidence.

We ſhould daily adore the God of nature, for lighting up the ſun, that glorious though imperfect image of his own unapproachable luſtre; and appointing it to gild the earth with its various rays, to chear us with its benign influences, and to guide and direct us in our journeys, and our labours. But how incomparably more valuable is that *day-ſpring from on high, which hath viſited us, to give light to them that ſit in darkneſs, and in the ſhadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace?* Oh Chriſtians, for I now addreſs myſelf to you, whoſe eyes are ſo happy to ſee, and your ears to hear, what reaſon have you for daily and hourly praiſe? when your minds are delighted with contemplating the riches of goſpel grace, when you view with wonder and joy the harmonious contrivance of our redemption, when you feel the burthen of your guilt removed, the freedom of your addreſs to the throne of grace encouraged, and ſee the proſpect of a fair inheritance of eternal glory opening upon you; then in the pleaſing tranſports of your ſouls, borrow the joyful anthem of the pſalmiſt, and ſay, with the humbleſt gratitude and ſelf-reſignation, *God is the Lord who ſheweth us light; bind the ſacrifice with cords, even to the horns of the altar.* Adore *God, who firſt commanded the light to ſhine out of darkneſs*, that by the diſcoveries of his word, and the operations of his ſpirit, he hath *ſhined in your hearts to give you the knowledge of his glory*, as *reflected from the face of his ſon.* Let us all adore him that this revelation hath reached us, who live in an age and country ſo diſtant from that in which it firſt appeared; while there are to this very day, not only dark corners, but regions of the earth, that *are full of the habitations of idolatry and cruelty.*

Let

Let me peculiarly addreſs myſelf to thoſe whoſe education and circumſtances of life have given them opportunities of a fuller enquiry into the ſtate of thoſe ancient or modern nations, that have been left merely to the light of unaſſiſted reaſon; even to thoſe who are acquainted with the hiſtory of their Gods, the rites of their prieſts, the tales and even the hymns of their poets, thoſe beautiful trifles; nay, I will add, the reaſonings of their ſageſt philoſophers; all the precarious, and all the erroneous things they have ſaid, where religion and immortality are concerned. I have ſometimes thought that God gave to ſome of the moſt celebrated pagan writers that uncommon ſhare of genius and eloquence, that they might as it were by their art embalm the monſters of antiquity; that ſo ſucceeding ages might ſee, in a more affecting view than we could otherwiſe have done, how weak the human mind is in its beſt eſtate, and the need which the greateſt, as well as the meaneſt of mankind, have of being taught by a revelation from above. Permit me to remind you, that while you are daily converſing with ſuch monuments as theſe, and are alſo ſurveying the evidences of chriſtianity, in a larger and more diſtinct view than it was poſſible for me here to propoſe them, you are under peculiar obligations to be very thankful for the goſpel yourſelves, as well as to compaſſionate the cauſe of thoſe to whom it has never been offered, or by whom it is ſlighted. And this leads me to another reflection,

2. What reaſon have we to pity thoſe who reject this glorious goſpel, even when they have opportunities of enquiring into its cleareſt evidences?

Such undoubtedly we have in our own age and nation: and ſurely we ſhould ſometimes beſtow a compaſſionate thought upon them, and lift up humble prayers for them, that God, peradventure, may give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, that they may recover themſelves out of the ſnare of the devil, who are now led captive by him at his pleaſure; we ſhould pity Heathens and Mahometans under their darkneſs and errors; but how much more deplorable is the caſe of theſe, who, though they dwell in Emanuel's land, and in the valley of viſion, turn it into the valley of the ſhadow of death, by cloſing their eyes againſt ſo bright a luſtre, and ſtopping their ears againſt the voice of the charmer? They are indeed, in their own conceit, the only people, and wiſdom will die with them: ſo that, to be ſure, they will ſcorn our pity. But who can forbear it? Is there a more melancholy thought than this, that the Son of God ſhould have done ſo much to introduce and eſtabliſh the goſpel, and his ſpirit ſo much to perpetuate and encreaſe its evidence: and that, after all, it ſhould be contemptuouſly deſpiſed, even by creatures who are periſhing without it? That the bleſſed Jeſus, inſtead of being re-

ceived with open arms as the great deliverer, ſhould either be treated as an empty name; or if acknowledged to be a real perſon, ſhould then be repreſented as a viſionary enthuſiaſt, or a wicked impoſtor; for there is no other alternative? and this not only, though I believe moſt frequently by men of profligate and abandoned lives; but ſometimes by perſons of external morality and decency, of great humanity and ſweetneſs of temper (for ſuch I know are to be found among them) as well as men of wit and genius, of politeneſs and learning, of human prudence and experience in affairs. I may alſo add, that it is the caſe of ſome who were the children of pious parents, who were trained up in religious exerciſes, who once diſcovered ſerious impreſſions, and gave very encouraging hopes. Alas, whither are they fallen! How ſhall we ſhelter thoſe that were once our brethren, that are perhaps ſtill our friends, from the aweful ſentence which the goſpel denounces againſt all that reject it, without any exception? As to the wretches that add inſult and deriſion to their infidelity, I tremble to think of that load of guilt which they are bringing upon themſelves; and how near they approach to the unpardonable ſin, if they have not already committed it. For the reſt, who behave in a more modeſt and ſober manner, it will, no doubt, be a very difficult taſk to convince them: and ſo much the rather, as ſome of them, by too eaſy a tranſition, have renounced many of the moſt important principles of natural religion: nay, I might add even the whole of it, together with the chriſtian revelation. But the influences of divine grace are almighty. Let us recommend them to it, and omit no other proper method, either of recovering ſuch as are already ſeduced, or at leaſt of ſecuring thoſe who are not yet infected: but may be, as moſt of the youth are, eſpecially in the moſt populous places, in imminent danger of the contagion. To this end let me add,

3. How reaſonable is it, that chriſtians ſhould form a familiar acquaintance with the great evidences of our common faith?

It is what we ſo apparently owe to the honour of God, to the intereſt of Chriſt, to the peace of our own ſouls, and the edification of others, that I hope I need not urge it at large, eſpecially conſidering what has been ſaid before. In conſequence of all, let it be your care to make the evidences of chriſtianity the ſubject of your ſerious reflections and frequent converſe. Eſpecially ſtudy your Bibles, where ſuch marks of truth and divinity are to be found, that I believe few who have familiarly known them, and have had a reliſh for them, were ever brought to make ſhipwreck of their faith as it is in Jeſus. Above all, let it be your care to act on the rules which are here laid down: and then ye will find your faith growing in a happy proportion, and experience the truth of our Saviour's declaration, that if any man will

reſolutely and faithfully do his will, he ſhall know of the chriſtian doctrine, whether it be of God. I verily believe, that 'tis the purity of its precepts which lies at the bottom of moſt men's oppoſition to it: or a natural pride of heart, which gives them an averſion againſt ſo humbling a ſcheme; or a fond affectation of ſeeming wiſer than others, in rejecting what moſt of their neighbours do, at leaſt profeſs, to believe. When theſe unhappy prejudices and conceptions are by divine grace conquered and rooted out, the evidence of truth will daily appear with an increaſing luſtre: As the light of the ſun does to an eye recovering from a film with which it had been overgrown; and which before had veiled it with midnight in the midſt of noon. Once more,

4. How ſolicitous ſhould we be to embrace and obey that goſpel, which comes attended with ſuch abundant evidences!

I may undoubtedly addreſs myſelf to moſt of my readers, and ſay, as Paul did to king Agrippa, *Believeſt thou the prophets? I know that thou believeſt*; yet let me intreat and charge you, not to reſt here; but attentively to examine how far your hearts are affected, and your lives regulated by ſuch a belief. The chriſtian revelation is a practical thing; and is heard, believed, and profeſſed in vain, if it be not obeyed.

In this goſpel *the wrath of God is revealed from heaven againſt all the ungodlineſs of men*; but it is revealed with redoubled fury againſt that audacious ſinner, *who holds the truth in unrighteouſneſs*. In this goſpel the bleſſed Jeſus is exalted, both as a *Prince and a Saviour*; and it is not with impunity, that the impenitent rebel can reject his yoke, and trample on his blood. What muſt they expect who have poured contempt on ſuch a Sovereign, and on ſuch a Redeemer?

Let it be earneſtly and frequently recollected, that this goſpel is the touch-ſtone by which you are one day to be tried; the balance in which an impartial judge will weigh you; and muſt, on the whole, prove your everlaſting triumph, or your everlaſting torment. The Almighty did not introduce it with ſuch ſolemn notice, ſuch high expectation, ſuch pompous miracles, ſuch aweful ſanctions, that men might reject, or diſhonour it at pleaſure; but it will certainly be found, to the greateſt and meaneſt of thoſe that hear it, *a Saviour of life unto life*, or *a Saviour of death unto death*.

Let it therefore be your immediate care, to enquire, which of theſe it is likely to prove to your ſouls; remember it is ſo far from being a vain thing,

thing, that it is really your very life. If it has been hitherto deſpiſed, and that bleſſed Redeemer, in whom it ſo evidently centers, has been neglected, aſſure yourſelves that all I have ſaid in confirmation of its truth, proves only that the *hand-writing of God* is ſet to your condemnation. Allow yourſelves therefore not a moment's reſt, till you have with humble ſubmiſſion applied to his throne, while there is yet hope that it may be reverſed.

And for you who have hitherto believed and obeyed the goſpel, let it be your care to defend and adorn it; *be blameleſs and harmleſs, the children of God without rebuke, in the midſt of a crooked and perverſe generation, ſhining among them as lights in the world*; perhaps your example may not only ſerve to entertain their eyes, but *to guide their feet into the way of peace*, and engage them alſo to join with you in *glorifying your Father which is in heaven*.

THE

THE HISTORY OF Our BLESSED LORD and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST.

CHAP. I.

A ſhort account of the general expectation of the Meſſiah that prevailed in the world at the time of his appearance. The angel Gabriel foretels the conception and birth of John the Baptiſt. Gabriel ſalutes the Virgin Mary. The holy Virgin viſits Elizabeth. The birth of John the Baptiſt.

THE mind of man cannot find a more delightful employment, than to contemplate on the divine wiſdom in the government of the world. The civil hiſtory of mankind opens a wide field for this pious and pleaſing exerciſe. By the light of reaſon alone careful obſervers may form probable conjectures with regard to the plan of God's providence, and diſcover an unerring hand directing the revolution of human affairs, and compaſſing the beſt ends, by the moſt effectual and ſurpriſing means: but the ſacred writings, by drawing aſide that veil, which hides the councils of the Almighty, lays open his deſigns to the view of his creatures; and we can trace the ſteps he taketh towards them with much greater pleaſure and certainty. The facts inſpired writers relate are equally inſtructive with the doctrines they teach. The latter inform us that God is powerful, and wiſe, and good; the former diſcover theſe perfections carried into action, and confirm ſpeculative opinions by real and ſtriking examples.

The manifeſtation and eſtabliſhment of Chriſtianity was a remarkable event of this kind, and contributes highly to illuſtrate and magnify the divine power and wiſdom. From beginnings the moſt inconſiderable, and by inſtruments the moſt unlikely, the Almighty, with

incredible facility, raiſed that glorious fabric of his church, which hath hitherto withſtood all the rage of its enemies, and *the gates of hell*, we truſt, *ſhall never prevail againſt it. The leaſt of all ſeeds*, to uſe a metaphor of our dear redeemer, *grew up and waxed a great tree, and ſpread out its branches and filled the earth.* The hand of Omnipotence ſheltered this feeble plant from the ſtorm, and by his care it was reared, cultivated, and arrived at maturity. The wiſdom and power of men united to oppoſe the doctrine of God; but it confounded the one, and overcame the other. Neither the bigotry of the Jews, nor the ſuperſtition of the heathen, could reſiſt its progreſs; *and in vain did Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and people of Iſrael, gather themſelves together againſt the Lord and againſt his anointed.*

About the time of Chriſt's appearance, a general opinion prevailed, that the Almighty would vouchſafe to ſend forth ſome eminent meſſenger, to communicate a more perfect diſcovery of his will to mankind. The ſupreme Being conducteth all his operations by general laws; among which this ſeems to be one, that no perfection of any kind can be attained at once. This we ſhall find true with regard to all the productions in the natural, and all the changes in the moral world. The ſame principle appears to have regulated the diſpenſations of religion. The light of revelation was not poured in upon mankind at once, and with its full ſplendor. The obſcurity of the dawn went before the brightneſs of the noon-day. The will of God was at firſt made known by revelations, uſeful indeed, but dark and myſterious. To this ſucceeded others more clear and perfect. In proportion as the ſituation of the world made it neceſſary, the Almighty was pleaſed farther to open and unfold his ſcheme; and men came by degrees to underſtand this progreſſive plan of providence, and to conceive how ſyſtems temporary and incomplete might ſerve to introduce that concluding and perfect revelation, which would *declare the whole council of God to man.*

The dignity of the perſon employed to publiſh this revelation, the virtues of his character, the glory of his kingdom, and the ſigns of his coming, were deſcribed by the ancient prophets with the utmoſt perſpicuity. Guided by this *ſure word of prophecy*, the Jews of that age concluded the period, predetermined by God, to be then completed; and that the *fulneſs of time* being come, the promiſed Meſſiah would ſuddenly appear. Devout perſons among them *waited day and night for the conſolation of Iſrael*; and the whole nation groaning under the Roman yoke; and ſtimulated by the deſire of liberty and vengeance, expected their deliverer with the moſt anxious impatience.

Nor were theſe expectations peculiar to the Jews. By their diſperſions amongſo many nations, by their converſation with the learned men among the heathen, and the tranſlation of their inſpired writings into

a language now almoſt univerſal, the principles of their religion were ſpread over all the Eaſt; and it became the common belief, that a prince would ariſe at that time in Judea, who would change the face of the world, and extend his empire from one end of the earth to the other.

In the midſt of theſe expectations the angel Gabriel, who had formerly been ſent to Daniel with a preciſe declaration of the time when the true Meſſiah, the ſaviour of the world, ſhould appear, was now again ſent to Zacharias, a pious and upright prieſt of the courſe of Abia, whilſt he was offering the ſacred incenſe in the temple, according to the prieſtly office, to foretel the birth of a ſon, a miraculous child of age and barrenneſs; a ſon which ſhould ſhortly be born to this deſcendant of Aaron by his virtuous wife Elizabeth, who ſhould be filled with the Holy Ghoſt, and prove the forerunner and great harbinger of the world's redeemer.

The form and appearance of the aerial meſſenger ſufficiently convinced the pious Zacharias, that he was not an inhabitant of the earthly but of the heavenly Canaan; but he neither knew his office, nor the intention of his coming. No wonder therefore that he was terrified at his preſence. But this benevolent miniſter, with a ſmile of ineffable ſweetneſs, deſired the hoary prieſt, to baniſh all apprehenſions of dread and terror from his mind: *fear not, Zacharias, for thy prayer is heard, and thy wife Elizabeth ſhall bear thee a ſon.* What prayer had he offered that this angelic viſitant aſſured him was heard! not ſurely for a ſon. His advanced age, and that of his wife Elizabeth, rendered this, according to the courſe of nature, highly improbable, at leaſt, if not impoſſible. Beſides, the prieſts in this office were conſidered as the mouth of the people; and conſequently, the ſubject of their prayers regarded the welfare of the nation: we may therefore very naturally ſuppoſe, that he had ſtrongly interceeded with Omnipotence, to haſten the coming of the great redeemer of mankind, the long expected Meſſiah, the prince of peace, in whom all the families of the earth were to be bleſſed. And, indeed, the ſpeech of the angel plainly intimates that his prayer regarded this great event: *fear not, Zacharias, the prayer* thou haſt offered to the throne of grace concerning the coming of Emanuel *is heard, and behold thy wife Elizabeth ſhall bear thee a ſon*, who ſhall go before the face of the Lord to prepare his way.

Zacharias, ſurpriſed at ſuch a meſſage, as before at the ſudden appearance of the heavenly viſitant, and conſidering the pregnancy of his wife, now ſo greatly advanced in years, as a thing incredible, raſhly demanded a ſign to confirm the truth of the prediction, though the news was told him by an angel of light. His fear, perhaps, hindered him from reflecting that this was not the firſt time that God had viſited the aged, and opened the barren womb. He could not but know, that Iſaac

was conceived when his mother was extremely old; and that Samuel was the ſon of her who had been called barren.

The angel, however, condeſcended to give him a ſign as he deſired; but a ſign that at once convinced him of the truth of the prediction, and puniſhed him for his unbelief. He had ſinned with his lips, and the angel deprived him of the faculty of ſpeech, declaring he ſhould remain in that condition till the accompliſhment of the prediction; becauſe he had dared to diſbelieve a meſſage from Omnipotence himſelf. *Behold thou ſhalt be dumb, and not able to ſpeak, until the day that thoſe things ſhall be performed; becauſe thou believeſt not my words, which ſhall be accompliſhed in their ſeaſon,* Luke i. 20.

This ſentence was no ſooner denounced than executed; ſo that when he came out to bleſs the people who had continued praying in the court while the incenſe was offering, he could not ſpeak, but ſignified to them by ſigns, that he had ſeen a viſion in the temple, and that this was the cauſe of his dumbneſs.

Soon after his wife Elizabeth conceived, according to the prediction of the angel, and concealed herſelf from company five months, ſpending her time in pious exerciſes and ſilent meditations on the unſearchable ways of God, and his *wonderful goodneſs towards the children of men.*

Six months after this viſion, the ſame heavenly meſſenger was ſent to an obſcure young virgin, named Mary, then dwelling at Nazareth, under the guardianſhip of Joſeph her eſpouſed huſband, both of the houſe and lineage of David, with the joyful tidings, that ſhe was choſen by the eſpecial favour of Omnipotence, to be the happy mother of the promiſed Saviour of the world. This heavenly meſſage was conceived in terms of the higheſt reſpect: *Hail! thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: bleſſed art thou among women.* A ſalutation ſo unuſual, and from a being whoſe appearance declared him more than mortal, filled her with the greateſt perturbation of mind. The angel, therefore, to remove her fears, explained in the moſt ſoothing accents, the true purport of his meſſage; informing her that God had determined to confer on her the higheſt honour capable of being enjoyed by any of the human race; that ſhe was to be the happy mother of the long-expected Meſſiah, who on earth was to be called Jeſus, becauſe he would prove the reſtorer of human nature, and the Saviour of the world; but in heaven was ſtiled, *the eternal ſon of God:* that his almighty father would give him the throne typified by that of David his earthly father; for he was to rule over the houſe of Jacob, the ſpiritual Iſrael, even all that imitated the faith and obedience of that patriarch; and that this ſpiritual kingdom of the great Meſſiah ſhould never have an end.

The holy virgin did not remember, that the prophet Iſaiah had long ſince foretold, that *a virgin ſhould conceive and bear a ſon:* ſhe

conſidered her virginity as an unſurmountable obſtacle to the accompliſhment of the angel's meſſage, as it was a thing ſupernatural, and abſolutely without example; and therefore ſhe deſired the meſſenger to explain it. But though it was impoſſible for her to comprehend the manner how a virgin ſhould conceive, yet ſhe did not, like old Zacharias, aſk for a miracle to confirm it. She was firmly perſuaded, that all things were poſſible to God, and only deſired to underſtand how her pregnancy could be effected in her virgin ſtate. This was a requeſt conſiſtent with faith and the weakneſs of her apprehenſion, and at the ſame time made with modeſty and humility: it is therefore no wonder that the aerial meſſenger readily condeſcended to explain this myſterious event, long ſince planned in the court of heaven. *The Holy Ghoſt ſhall come upon thee, and the power of the higheſt ſhall overſhadow thee.* This wonderful tranſaction ſhall be accompliſhed by the interpoſition of the holy ſpirit, and the ſpecial energy of the power of the moſt high. And as thou ſhalt conceive him by the immediate operation of the Holy Ghoſt, he *ſhall be called the ſon of God.* The angel alſo informed her that her couſin Elizabeth, though ſtricken in age, and for many years conſidered as barren, had almoſt ſix months before conceived a ſon; adding this irrefragable reaſon for both theſe myſterious events, that *with God nothing ſhall be impoſſible.* This anſwer ſufficiently removed all her doubts and diſſipated her fears. She had long wiſhed, in common with all the daughters of Jacob, to be the fortunate mother of the redeemer of Iſrael, and had now the happineſs of knowing that God would grant her deſire; and accordingly this holy virgin expreſſed in the humbleſt accents, her firm belief of the heavenly prediction, and her entire reſignation to the decrees of Omnipotence. *Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it unto me according to thy word.*

Immediately after the departure of the angel, Mary aroſe and went into the mountainous country of Judea, though ſeventy miles diſtant from Nazareth, to congratulate Elizabeth and her huſband on the joyful tidings ſhe had heard. The ecſtatic joy which filled the breaſts of theſe three holy perſons at their firſt embracing one another may in ſome meaſure be conceived from the pathetic account tranſmitted to us by the evangeliſt St. Luke, who informs us, that as ſoon as Mary ſpake the babe leaped in the womb of Elizabeth for joy; and that holy woman herſelf being inſpired at the approach of the Meſſiah, ſaluted the virgin with the grand title of *The mother of my Lord.* Nor did her inſpiration ceaſe with giving her this glorious appellation; but in a prophetic extacy uttered things which ſhe could only know by inſpiration from above; things that could not fail of aſtoniſhing Mary, and, at the ſame time, of confirming her faith beyond every poſſibility of doubt. She even uſed the very words of the angel in the ſalutation, *Bleſſed art thou among women*; adding, in

alluſion

alluſion to the pſalmiſt, *and bleſſed is the fruit of thy womb.* For as this child was the promiſed ſeed ſo long expected, ſo earneſtly deſired, in whom all the families of the earth were to be bleſſed, he muſt be bleſſed himſelf. *His name ſhall continue as long as the ſun; and men ſhall be bleſſed in him; all nations ſhall call him bleſſed,* Pſalm lxxii. 17.

At this ecſtatic ſpeech the holy virgin was alſo filled with the Holy Ghoſt, and expreſſed the deepeſt ſenſe of her own unworthineſs, and of the infinite goodneſs of the Almighty, in appointing her the happy mother of the great Meſſiah. Having thus, to her unſpeakable ſatisfaction, found every thing conformable to the ſaying of the angel, ſhe returned to Nazareth at the end of three months, when the period of Elizabeth's pregnancy was completed.

The time was now arrived when the forerunner of the prince of peace ſhould be born; and on the eighth day after his birth, he was, according to the direction of the angel, who had foretold this ſurpriſing event, called John, a name in the Hebrew language very expreſſive of that gracious diſpenſation which heaven was then going to diſplay by the goſpel, of which this child was appointed the harbinger. And the angel's prediction being now fulfilled, Zacharias, in an inſtant, recovered his ſpeech, and with an audible articulate voice praiſed God in the moſt rapturous expreſſions, to the aſtoniſhment of all that were preſent. Such extraordinary events filled the inhabitants of the country with a religious awe, and occaſioned many conjectures concerning the child.

We cannot here help admiring the wiſe diſpenſations of Providence in ordering ſo many extraordinary events to accompany the conception and birth of John the Baptiſt; that he, who was to be the meſſenger of the great Meſſiah might not appear an obſcure and ordinary perſon, but the peculiar object of the decrees and councils of heaven. He entered the world in this magnificent manner, that the attention of his countrymen being awakened, and filled with high expectations concerning him, he might with much greater advantage perform the office of his miniſtry, and effectually prepare the people for receiving the Meſſiah himſelf, who was now ſhortly to appear in perſon. Accordingly, the Baptiſt was, from his infancy, remarkable for the qualities both of his body and mind: he enjoyed in an eminent degree the protection, bleſſing, and aſſiſtance of the God of nature, and continued during the whole courſe of his private life in the deſerts, or hill-country of Judea, till his public miniſtry commenced about the thirtieth year of his age; when the following prophecy of his father concerning his future greatneſs was fulfilled. *Thou, O child, ſhalt be called the prophet of the higheſt: for thou ſhalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; to give knowledge of ſalvation to his people, by the remiſſion of their ſins, through the tender mercies of our God, where-*

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by the day ſpring from on high hath viſited us, to give light to them that ſit in darkneſs and in the ſhadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace, Luke i. 6, &c.

Soon after the return of the holy virgin from her viſit of Zacharias to Nazareth, the place of her reſidence, ſhe began to give ſuch evident ſigns of her pregnancy, that her aged ſpouſe, who had abſtained from all matrimonial commerce with her, conceived very unfavourable ſuſpicions of her chaſtity, and meditated the diſſolution of the marriage; but previouſly determined to converſe with her on the ſubject: and ſhe, in vindication of her innocence, related the viſion of the angel, the meſſage he had delivered to her, and the miraculous event that had happened to Zacharias and Elizabeth. Joſeph, however, being apprehenſive that the whole might be a ſtratagem of Mary and her relations, to prevent her reputation from being blaſted, thought himſelf obliged to divorce her; for he was a juſt man, a religious obſerver of the law. But, at the ſame time determined to do this as privately as poſſible, by putting the bill into her boſom before two witneſſes only, and without mentioning the reaſon of the divorce, which would have expoſed her to the puniſhment of death. He likewiſe well knew that all things were poſſible to God; and, conſequently, that what ſhe had alledged in favour of her own innocence might be true, however difficult to be credited by human reaſon; and he therefore thought himſelf bound by all the ties of juſtice and piety to preſerve her character as much as poſſible, though the reaſons ſhe had alledged did not appear ſufficient to juſtify him in retaining her in his houſe.

But while his mind was agitated with theſe reflections, a pleaſing ſlumber ſealed his eyes; and by an internal light, he ſaw a meſſenger from the heavenly Canaan, who fully explained the nature of Mary's pregnancy, baniſhed all his fears, and commanded him to take home his wife. *Joſeph, thou ſon of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife; for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghoſt*, Luke i. 20.

Joſeph did not heſitate a moment to obey the heavenly viſion; for no ſooner had the chearful rays of the morning decked the chambers of the Eaſt in vivid purple, than this pious Iſraelite left his couch, and with a joyful heart executed the orders he had received from on high, by giving his wife an account of the revelation that had been made him of her innocence, and taking her to his houſe. During this converſation with her, he obſerved ſuch a remarkable chaſtity as was entirely conformable to ſo great a myſtery; and accordingly he knew her not till ſhe had brought forth the great Meſſiah. Thus was the prophecy of Iſaiah fully accompliſhed; for it was not ſufficient that a virgin ſhould conceive, but alſo that a virgin ſhould bring forth a ſon. *Behold, a virgin ſhall conceive, and bear a ſon, and ſhall call his name Immanuel, which, being interpreted, is God with us*, Iſaiah vii. 14. Matth. i. 23.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

The edict for taxing Judea. Jesus is born in Bethlehem, the city of David. Angels appear to the shepherds of Bethlehem, and declare the birth of Christ the saviour of the world. The circumcision and presentation of Christ in the temple. The eastern Magi arrive at Jerusalem, and worship the Messiah. Joseph fleeth into Egypt. The infants of Bethlehem slain. Herod dies; and Joseph returns out of Egypt.

SOON after these transactions a decree was published by Augustus Cæsar, that a new survey of the Roman empire should be made, and an estimate taken of all the persons, estates, and riches in his extensive dominions. Accordingly Herod ordered every one to repair to the city of his people, to be enrolled; and Joseph and Mary, being both descendants from the house of David, went up from Nazareth the place of their abode to Bethlehem, the city where David and his ancestors were born. But the great concourse of people then coming to that place put this poor little family to great inconveniences: they were obliged to stay some time at Bethlehem, but could procure no other habitation than that of a stable, owing to a particular providence of God, that he who was to be the pattern of humility should begin and end his days in the same low and dejected path. And accordingly in this mean apartment the holy virgin brought forth her god-like son, wrapped him in swaddling cloaths, and, for want of better accommodation, laid him in a manger. What prodigies of greatness and benevolence of wisdom and charity, of meekness and humility are here exhibited! As God, his throne is in heaven, and he fills all things by his immensity: as man circumscribed within the narrow limits of a manger, and utters his infant cries in a stable. As God seated on an exalted throne; as man exposed to the lowest state of misery and want. As God cloathed in a robe of glory; as man wraped in the meanest swaddling bands. As God encircled with myriads of angels; as man surrounded with the beasts of the field. Surely such condescension calls for our utmost gratitude. Let us remember that it was to redeem us from the power of sin and death, that the eternal Son of God left the bosom of his father, and submitted himself to an inglorious, indigent, and necessitous condition; and we shall surely be convinced that such incomprehensible love demands our most submissive obedience to all his commands, and the most grateful anthems of praise and adoration. We should cry out with the prophet, *Sing, O heavens, and be joyful, O earth, and break forth into singing, O mountains; for the Lord hath comforted his people*, Isaiah xlix. 13.

But though the son of God was confined to the mean habitation of a stable, and the company of the beasts of the field; yet a multitude of the heavenly host was dispatched from the courts of heaven, to publish the happy news to a degenerate world. Certain shepherds, who were watching

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ing the flocks by night in the fields of Bethlehem were viſited by the angelic meſſengers, with the pleaſing tidings that the great Meſſiah, the deſire of all nations, was that moment born. The inexpreſſible ſplendor ſurrounding theſe heavenly meſſengers terrified the ſhepherds, while it gave them notice of their arrival. But to calm their fears, one of the angels informed them that their errand was not to inſpire terror, but to inform them that the long-expected Meſſiah was born in Bethlehem. *Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which ſhall be to all people. And this ſhall be a ſign unto you, ye ſhall find the babe wrapped in ſwaddling cloaths, lying in a manger*, Luke ii. 10, &c.

No ſooner were theſe welcome tidings publiſhed, than a multitude of the heavenly hoſt were heard celebrating, in the moſt rapturous ſtrains, the praiſes of Omnipotence for his unſpeakable mercy to the human race, *Glory to God in the higheſt, and on earth peace, good-will towards men.* And as the celeſtial choir vaniſhed, they ſhouted in the ſweeteſt and moſt ſeraphic accents, happineſs, peace, and benevolence, expreſſing the higheſt admiration of the goodneſs of the Almighty, which now began to dawn with a bright luſtre on the arrival of his only begotten ſon to ſave the world.

As ſoon as this celeſtial concert was ended, the ſhepherds repaired to Bethlehem to ſeek the Saviour of mankind; and, as the heavenly meſſenger had foretold, they found the prince of peace wrapped in the meaneſt cloaths, and lying in a manger, attended only by his virgin-mother, and Joſeph his ſuppoſed father. This ſight, ſo conformable to the heavenly meſſage, filled them with a pleaſing aſtoniſhment; and they related all they had ſeen and heard from the angelick hoſt; and after adoring the God-like infant, they returned, praiſing and extolling the goodneſs and mercies of the Almighty, to the amazement of all who heard them, publiſhing, in every place, *the wonderful works of God.*

The Holy Family ſtill continued in Bethlehem; and when eight days were accompliſhed, they circumciſed the heavenly infant, according to the inſtitutions of the law of Moſes, and called his name Jeſus, which had been *given him by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.*

Thus our bleſſed Saviour, though the ſupreme law-giver, and conſequently not bound to the obſervation of his own law, and being free from original ſin, had no need, on that account, of circumciſion; yet as *he was made of a woman, made under the law*, and *came*, as he himſelf teſtifies, *to fulfil all righteouſneſs*, it was neceſſary he ſhould receive the character which diſtinguiſhed the Jews from all other nations; that he might have free converſation with and *gather together the loſt ſheep of the houſe of Iſrael.* And as in him was fulfilled that moſt glorious of all the promiſes made to Abraham, *In thy ſeed ſhall all the families of the earth be bleſſed*, it was proper he ſhould receive the ſeal or teſtimony of circumciſion, in order to ſhew

that he was truly deſcended from that great patriarch, *the friend of God.* Beſides, as he was come into the world to be a mediator of a *new and better covenant*, it was but decent, that the former ſhould terminate with honour; and ſurely this could not be more fully performed than by approving himſelf of that ſacrament, which was both of divine inſtitution, and a means of admiſſion in the former covenant.

But as the law alſo required that he ſhould be preſented in the temple at the end of forty days from his birth, and the uſual offerings made to the prieſt, his parents found it more convenient to repair with him to Jeruſalem from Bethlehem, where he was born, the diſtance being only ſix miles, than, after his mother's recovery, to carry him firſt to Nazareth, which was a great way from Jeruſalem. It is therefore very reaſonable to ſuppoſe that they tarried at Bethlehem till the days of his mother's purification were accompliſhed, and then repaired to Jeruſalem. At their entering the temple, the ſacrifices preſcribed for the purication of women were offer'd for the bleſſed virgin, though her immaculate conception rendered the ceremony unneceſſary. This being performed, ſhe aſſiſted at the preſentation of her ſon to the Lord, by delivering him into the hands of the prieſt, and paying the five ſhekels, which the law exacted for the redemption of every firſt-born ſon, without any regard to the circumſtances of the family. A rite inſtituted to perpetuate the memory of the divine mercy, in ſparing the firſt-born of Iſrael, when thoſe of Egypt, both men and beaſt, were deſtroyed. At the ſame time an offering was to be made to the Lord, which, for the poorer ſort, conſiſted of a pair of turtle doves, or two young pigeons; and this was the offering made at the preſentation of the redeemer of Iſrael; a ſufficient proof of the mean circumſtances of the parents of the holy Jeſus, though both deſcendants from the royal houſe of David.

While theſe ceremonies were performing, old Simeon, *an Iſraelite, indeed*, venerable on account of his age, his prophetic ſpirit, his virtue, and his conſummate piety, entered the temple. He had long waited for the redemption of Iſrael; and had been promiſed by the ſpirit of truth, that he ſhould not leave the regions of mortality before he had ſeen the great perſon who was to effect it. Accordingly the ſpirit which had brought him into the temple ſignified to him that the bleſſed Jeſus was the Meſſiah ſo often promiſed, and now ſo earneſtly expected. Tranſported at this joyful revelation, he took the infant in his arms, and in a heavenly exſtaſy praiſed the Almighty God of Jacob for his gracious condeſcenſion in letting him live to ſee the Saviour of the world. *Lord, now letteſt thou thy ſervant depart in peace according to thy word. For mine eyes have ſeen thy ſalvation: which thou haſt prepared before the face of all people: a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Iſrael*, Luke ii. 29, &c.

Theſe

Engraved for the Life of Our Saviour.



L. De Boullongne Pinxit.

N. Berwerman sculp.

And Simeon came by the Spirit into the Temple: And when the Parents brought in the Child Jesus — he took him in his Arms, and blessed God, and said — Mine Eyes have seen thy Salvation. Luke II. 27. 28. 30.

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Theſe words ſurpriſed both Joſeph and Mary: not becauſe they imported things greater than could be applied to their ſon; they knew him to be the Meſſiah, and, conſequently, were ſenſible, that they properly belonged to him; but they marvelled how Simeon, a ſtranger, came to have any knowledge of the child. But Simeon, turning to the holy virgin, added, *Behold this child is ſent for the fall and riſing again of many in Iſrael:* this is the ſtumbling ſtone and rock of offence, which God hath long ago foretold he would lay in Zion, and by whom many in Iſrael ſhall fall: for they ſhall reject him on account of the meanneſs of his birth and fortune: but, at the ſame time, this is the ſtone ſet for the riſing again of many in Iſrael, becauſe thoſe who are fallen may riſe again by ſupporting themſelves on him. *Yea, a ſword ſhall pierce through thine own ſoul.* The darts ſhot at thy ſon ſhall pierce thee to thy heart; the calumnies, perſecutions, and ſufferings he ſhall be expoſed to, ſhall ſting thee to the heart, and prove the ſource of the moſt poignant reflections, *That the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.*

Who this Simeon was cannot be abſolutely known: ſome affirm, that he was a prieſt, and then performing his function in receiving the child in his arms, according to the cuſtom of redeeming the firſt-born. But the ſilence of St. Luke ſeems to contradict this opinion; for it is highly probable that the evangeliſt would have mentioned ſo remarkable a particular, had he been one of the prieſts. Others think it was *Simeon the juſt*, a diſciple of the famous Hillel, the maſter of Gamaliel, at whoſe feet St. Paul was brought up; and that while he was endeavouring to explain the celebrated prophecy in Iſaiah, *Behold a virgin ſhall conceive and bare a ſon*, this revelation was made to him, that he ſhould not die before he had ſeen it accompliſhed. Accordingly, in his beholding the miraculous mother and child, he broke out into that divine and prophetic ecſtaſy and died ſoon after. But it can hardly be ſuppoſed, that a perſon of his rank could make ſo public a declaration in favour of our bleſſed Saviour, without its being taken more notice of by the Jews. Beſides, if we conſider the ſeveral revelations which God at this time was pleaſed to make with regard to his Son, we ſhall find that none of them were directed to any of the Phariſees, or principal doctors of the law; but that theſe diſcoveries were made to Joſeph a carpenter, to Zacharias an ordinary prieſt, and to a company of poor ſhepherds; and therefore, it is much more natural to preſume, that this Simeon, to whom God had revealed the time of the Meſſiah's coming, was ſome pious plain man, more remarkable for his virtue and devotion, than his power and grandeur.

The teſtimony of this venerable ſage was accompanied by that of an aged woman called Anna, who had dedicated the remainder of her life, from her widowhood, to the ſervice of God and his temple; for ſhe coming in while the hoary Simeon held in his arms the Saviour of the world,

was filled with an ecſtacy of joy, and praiſed God aloud with great fervency; and from thenceforth publiſhed the glad tidings of the Meſſiah's appearance, to all the faithful among the ſons of Jacob.

Every thing required in the law being thus performed, Joſeph and his family retired *into Galilee to their own city Nazareth*, but did not ſtay there any conſiderable time; for putting their affairs in order, they returned to Bethlehem. They probably thought, that it was equally neceſſary that their ſon, in order to his being acknowledged the Meſſiah, ſhould be educated at Bethlehem, as it was for him to be born there, and which the providence of God had ſo miraculouſly brought to paſs. But, however that be, they reſided in Bethlehem with their ſon, when certain Eaſtern philoſophers arrived at Jeruſalem, and inquired for the king of the Jews, affirming, that they had ſeen his ſtar before they had left the Eaſt, and were come to pay him their adorations. Some of the fathers are of opinion, that the ſtar which the eaſtern Magi ſaw in their own country was the ſpirit of God: others ſuppoſe it was an angel; others a new ſtar in the firmament; others a comet; others ſome luminous appearance of light: A learned writer of our own, Dr. Lightfoot, thought it was the glory that ſurrounded the angels, who appeared to the ſhepherds of Bethlehem on the night of the nativity: But whatever this ſtar was, both the thing ſignified by it, and the courſe which theſe philoſophers were to purſue, were doubtleſs explained to them by revelation.

It has been aſked, how theſe eaſtern wiſe men could have any notion that the Jews expected a Meſſiah; and, therefore, though a new ſtar might appear in the heavens, why they ſhould immediately conclude, that the great king of Iſrael was born? In anſwer to this queſtion, it muſt be obſerved, that an opinion had long prevailed over all the Eaſt, that about this time a child would be born in Judea, who would reign over the whole earth; this is mentioned by Suetonius, Tacitus, and Joſephus. Nor is it difficult to explain on what baſis this uncommon expectation was founded. The Jews derived their expectations of the Meſſiah from the prophecies concerning him in their ſacred writings: and the Arabians, from the prophecies made to Abraham, being deſcended from his ſon Iſhmael. For it is ſufficiently evident, that they preſerved a traditional knowledge of this promiſe from the words of the Arabian prophet Balaam, *There ſhall come a ſtar out of Jacob, and a ſceptre ſhall ariſe out of Iſrael*, &c. which, doubtleſs relates to the Meſſiah. With regard to the other eaſtern nations, the expectation abovementioned owed its origin to their commerce with the Jews and Arabians, eſpecially the former, who being diſperſed through every part of the Eaſt, ſpread the knowledge of their prophecies, together with their religion, wherever they reſided; and hence that expectation became ſo univerſal, as to be taken notice of by the Roman writers. We are even told that Zoroaſtres, the celebrated reformer of the Magian diſcipline, and religious worſhip in

Perſia, was ſervant to the prophet Daniel, who was particularly favoured with revelations concerning the coming of the Meſſiah. If this be granted, it will not ſeem improbable that the expectation of his being born in Judea, ſhould have been ſo ſtrongly imprinted on the minds of the diſciples of Zoroaſtres, that on the appearance of a new ſtar three of them ſhould have been induced to undertake the journey, in order to be witneſſes of the truth of its accompliſhment. And hence we may in ſome meaſure account for the readineſs with which the inhabitants of the Eaſt embraced Chriſtianity; whilſt the Jews, blinded with prejudice, and ſoothed into the hopes of a conquering deliverer, rejected both him and his doctrine; and have endeavoured to perſuade their diſciples, if not themſelves, that his coming was for ſome ſecret reaſon, probably for the ſins of their nation, deferred till a more proper opportunity.

And, according to this notion, they ſtill expect, that he will appear in the pomp and grandeur of a conquering and victorious monarch, who ſhall free them from a foreign yoke, and ſubject every nation under heaven to that of the Jews; for this ſenſe they put upon the prophecies which diſplay the glory of his kingdom: and this being the principal bleſſing they expected from him, and on which they placed the higheſt value, could there be a more probable cauſe aſſigned for his delay, than that of their ſins? But had they opened their eyes to the oppoſite part of his character, which is there as plainly and expreſsly foretold, namely, that of his humiliation and ſufferings, of his being rejected, reproached, blaſphemed, and perſecuted, even to death; they muſt ſurely have concluded that their ſins however heinous, could not have delayed his coming. On the contrary, they would have been convinced, that ſince a perſon of his glorious, beneficent, and irreproachable character, was to be ſo cruelly treated, ſo unjuſtly, ſo inhumanly ſacrificed by his own people; no time could be more proper for his coming than when their nation was riſen to the very ſummit of ingratitude and injuſtice, of infatuation and inhumanity, as it really was when theſe prophecies were fulfilled in the appearance of Chriſt the Saviour of the world.

But to return from this digreſſion. The arrival of theſe eaſtern philoſophers at Jeruſalem filled the whole city with aſtoniſhment, eſpecially the tyrant Herod, who was particularly concerned in this event; but concealing the uneaſineſs of his mind, and pretending to liſten with a pleaſing attention to the Magi, ſhewed them the greateſt reſpect; and, in order to anſwer their queſtion, where they might find the Meſſiah, aſſembled the ſupreme council of the nation, and *demanded of them where Chriſt ſhould be born?* This queſtion did not require a long debate. They well knew that the prophets had particularly mentioned the place of his birth; and, accordingly, they aſſured their haughty monarch, that in the city of Bethlehem this miraculous perſon would be born, adding, that this was not a meer opinion of man, but a revelation from the Almighty

mighty himſelf: *For thus it is written by the prophets, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the leaſt among the princes of Juda; for out of thee ſhall come a governor that ſhall rule my people Iſrael,* Matt. ii. 5, 6.

Herod having thus obtained an anſwer from the chief prieſts and ſcribes, imparted it to the wiſe men, and ſent them to Bethlehem, the place to which the ancient prophecies had aſſigned the honour of his nativity; deſiring them, as ſoon as they had found the child, that he might alſo have an opportunity of worſhipping him. His real intention, indeed, was ſo far from paying adoration to the heavenly infant, that he meditated nothing leſs than to deſtroy him; for he conſidered him as a temporal prince, who was to wreſt the ſceptre from him or his deſcendants; not having the leaſt notion that the Meſſiah's kingdom was of a ſpiritual nature, and his throne eſtabliſhed in the heavenly Jeruſalem.

And here I cannot forbear remarking how conſpicuouſly the divine Providence appeared in the preſervation of our great Redeemer. Herod did not accompany the Magi in perſon; nor, under pretence of doing honour to theſe learned ſtrangers, ſend a guard to eſcort them, with ſecret orders to deſtroy both the child and his parents: in ſhort, he acted as if he had been altogether careleſs of the event, and quite contrary to his known character. Perhaps he imagined, that if he had gone in perſon, or ſent a guard, it might have alarmed the parents of the Meſſiah, and induced them to fly with their ſon to ſome diſtant region, whither his power did not extend.

But whatever thoughts determined Herod to act in this manner, the Magi having received the deſired information, departed under the direction of the ſtar which had led them all the way from their own country, but had diſappeared on their arrival in Judea; and this laid them under a neceſſity of repairing to the capital, to receive the neceſſary inſtructions; and thus the wiſdom of God by directing theſe eaſtern Sages to Jeruſalem, publiſhed the reaſon for their coming to the whole nation. Accordingly as ſoon as this end was obtained, and they were departed from Jeruſalem, the ſtar which had hitherto conducted them again appeared, and went before them to Bethlehem, where, to their great joy, it ſtood over the houſe in which the ſacred infant was lodged. Directed by this celeſtial appearance, they immediately entered the houſe, and falling down before him with the profoundeſt reverence, offered him gifts of gold, and frankincenſe, and myrrh. The whole intention of their journey being thus accompliſhed they propoſed to ſet out on their return to Jeruſalem; but during the night they were warned by God not to inform Herod of what they had ſeen; and accordingly they obeyed the heavenly viſion, and *departed into their own country another way.*

We muſt not however ſuppoſe that the ſatisfying the curioſity of theſe eaſtern ſages was the only intention of divine wiſdom, in directing them into Judea, to pay their adorations to the infant Jeſus. No, this viſit

anſwered

anſwered ſeveral other valuable purpoſes: 1. It ſufficiently ſhewed ſucceeding generations what expectations of the coming of the Meſſiah were entertained at this very time among the Gentiles, and conſequently confirmed the exiſtence of thoſe prophecies, which had filled, with ſuch pleaſing hopes, the breaſts of mankind. 2. It is very natural to ſuppoſe that theſe philoſophers, by the tidings they carried into the Eaſt concerning the king of Iſrael, might prepare their countrymen for ſubmitting to his authority in due time. And if their report was remembered by ſucceeding generations, it muſt have greatly contributed to their cheerful reception of the Goſpel, when it was preached to them by the apoſtles. 3. The coming of the Magi occaſioned the anſwer of the Sanhedrin, in which it was declared to be the unanimous opinion of all the Jewiſh Rabbins then living, that Bethlehem was, by the deſignation of Heaven, to be the place where the Meſſiah ſhould be born. 4. The ſeaſonable beneficence of theſe learned ſtrangers enabled Joſeph to ſubſiſt his family in Egypt, whither he was ſoon after directed to repair, in order to avoid the wrath of an incenſed monarch.

The wiſe men were no ſooner departed, than the angel of the Lord appeared to Joſeph, forewarned him of the bloody deſign of Herod, and commanded him to take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt. Joſeph did not heſitate to obey the divine admonition, but riſing in the night he departed into Egypt, *and was there till the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was ſpoken by the prophet, ſaying, Out of Egypt have I called my ſon,* Matth. ii. 15.

This prophecy, which we find in *Hoſea* xi. 1. ſeems to have been ſpoken originally of the Iſraelites. But the Evangeliſt's application of it will appear to be very juſt, if it be conſidered, that the carrying people into Egypt was a proverbial expreſſion for laying them under the greateſt hardſhips, and conſequently any ſingular interpoſition of Providence, either in favour of a perſon or nation, might be termed a calling them out of Egypt. Now as the flight of Chriſt into Egypt from the wrath of Herod happened in conſequence of a meſſage from Heaven, and was the means of ſaving his life, the application of the prophetical and proverbial expreſſion, *Out of Egypt have I called my ſon*, was juſt and beautiful.

In the mean time Herod waited impatiently for the return of the eaſtern ſages; but at laſt finding himſelf deluded, and his ſecret and ſubtle deſigns for deſtroying the heavenly infant blaſted, he broke out into the moſt violent paſſion of rage and fury, determining to effect by cruelty what he had been diſappointed of doing by policy. Accordingly, he ſent out his ſoldiers, and made a bloody maſſacree of all the children in the city of Bethlehem and the neighbouring towns, that were two years old and under; not doubting but in the general ſlaughter he ſhould deſtroy the infant-prince he ſo much dreaded:

dreaded: but God had provided him with a ſafe retreat, and ſheltered him from ſo ſhocking an inundation of human cruelty. The piercing cries however, of ſo many tender mothers for their innocent babes, and the groans of expiring infants, which filled the heavens, doubtleſs, haſtened the ſtroke of divine vengeance, which ſoon after fell on the tyrant's head, and by a ſtrange and fearful diſtemper put an end to his wicked and brutal life.

The Evangeliſt, to paint more pathetically the horror of maſſacreing ſo many innocent babes, quotes the propheſy of Jeremiah, *Then was fulfilled that which was ſpoken by Jeremiah the prophet, ſaying, In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping and great mourning; Rachel weeping, for her children, and would not be comforted becauſe they are not*, Matth. ii. 17, 18. The application of this prophecy, however, is made rather by way of accommodation than by completion. That is, the Evangeliſt has made an application of the expreſſions and figures, rather than of the prophecy itſelf. In the mean time the figure as uſed here has a peculiar beauty, which is wanting in the prophet. Rachel, the beloved wife of Jacob, being buried in the fields of Bethlehem, where the infants were ſlain, ſhe is awakened with their cries, riſes from the chambers of the grave, and bitterly bewails her innocent babes, who lie ſlaughtered in heaps around her.

Soon after the death of Herod, a heavenly meſſenger was again diſpatched to Joſeph, with orders for him to return into the land of Iſrael. Joſeph readily obeyed the ſummons, and would gladly have retired to Judea, probably to Bethlehem; but hearing that Archelaus had ſucceeded Herod in the government of Judea, he was fearful of putting his deſire in execution; and being directed by God in another viſion, he retired into Galilee, then governed by Antipas, a prince of a mild and benevolent diſpoſition, and took up his abode in his former habitation at Nazareth, where the ſtrange occurrences of our Lord's birth were not ſo generally known. The evangeliſt adds this farther reaſon for our bleſſed Saviour's ſpending his youth in Nazareth, *That it might be fulfilled which was ſpoken by the prophets, he ſhall be called a Nazarene*, Matth. ii. 23.

It has not eſcaped the obſervation of thoſe who have made it their buſineſs to remark every inaccuracy in the ſacred writings, that the words, *he ſhall be called a Nazarene*, are not found in any of the prophetical writings. But it ſhould be remembered, that though the very words are not found, yet the thing ſignified thereby often occurred; and therefore the application is made with ſufficient propriety. The Iſraelites deſpiſed the Galileans in general, but particularly the Nazarenes, who were ſo contemptible as to be the ſubject of ridicule, even for the Galileans themſelves. And hence a Nazarene became a proverbial term of reproach. Now, as the prophets in various places foretold that the Meſſiah ſhould be rejected and deſpiſed, they in reality predicted that he

he ſhould be called a Nazarene; and the Evangeliſt juſtly conſiders the reſiding of Chriſt at Nazareth as a circumſtance that had a conſiderable ſhare in the completion of theſe predictions; becauſe, in the courſe of his public miniſtry, this was frequently made a ſubject of ridicule, and was one of the principal reaſons why his countrymen would never liſten to his doctrine: ſo that the prophet very juſtly ſaid of him, *He is deſpiſed and rejected of men, a man of ſorrows and acquainted with grief: and we hid, as it were, our faces from him; he was deſpiſed, and we eſteemed him not*, Iſaiah liii. 3.

CHAP. III.

The hiſtory of Chriſt's childhood and private life. His diſpute with the Jewiſh doctors. The miſſion, character, and preaching of John the Baptiſt. Our bleſſed Saviour is baptized; and the Spirit viſibly deſcends upon him.

THE Evangeliſts have left us very imperfect accounts of our bleſſed Saviour's childhood and private life; but tell us, that as his body increaſed in ſtature, ſo the faculties of his ſoul were enlarged, and gradually filled with the moſt heavenly wiſdom. He had not, however, the advantage of a liberal education; and, in all probability, received no other inſtructions than what his parents gave him conformable to the law. Yet, notwithſtanding all theſe diſadvantages, he gave, even in his childhood, an inſtance of ſagacity far ſurpaſſing his years.

His parents, purſuant to the precepts of the law, went up yearly to Jeruſalem; and when he was twelve years old carried him with them to the Paſſover, to inſtil into his tender mind an early regard for virtue and the precepts of religion. Here the holy child choſe to ſtay, unknown to his parents, who departed with the reſt of the company, not doubting but he was with ſome of his relations or acquaintance; and therefore continued their journey, hoping to overtake him upon the road, or to find him at the village where they were to lodge. But all their hopes proved abortive; the child was neither to be found at the village, nor in the company of his relations. On the morrow, therefore, they returned in great anxiety, to Jeruſalem; and after three days ſorrowful ſearch, found him in the temple, ſitting among the Jewiſh doctors, and aſtoniſhing them with the wiſdom of his queſtions and anſwers, which were far ſuperior to his mean education and tender years.

It was a cuſtom among the Jews for the doctors and expounders of the law to teach the people publickly at the three grand feſtivals; and in this aſſembly it was that the bleſſed Jeſus diſcovered ſuch a wiſdom and penetration, as raiſed the admiration of all preſent, even to aſtoniſhment. Nor is it at all improbable to think that in theſe anſwers and objections he modeſtly inſinuated ſome corrections of the errors with which the Jewiſh teachers had now diſfigured religion; for he tells us himſelf, he was employed in his father's buſineſs.

His parents, finding him engaged in ſuch an employment, were aſtoniſhed beyond meaſure; and his pious mother in particular, though raviſhed at ſo pleaſing a ſcene, could not forbear expreſſing ſome tender reſentment at his leaving them without their knowledge, and the great concern his abſence had given them: *Son, why haſt thou thus dealt with us? Behold thy father and I have ſought thee ſorrowing.* He replied, that they had no reaſon to be ſurpriſed at his leaving them without their knowledge, ſince they might eaſily have known, from his miraculous birth, and the heavenly revelations attending it, that the God of Iſrael was his real father; that it was his buſineſs which induced him to put on the veil of human nature, and therefore it would be very wrong to think he could be always with them. *How is it that ye ſought me? wiſt ye not that I muſt be about my father's buſineſs?* His parents, however, did not underſtand this lecture of excellent wiſdom; but his mother treaſured up all his ſayings in her heart; and ſhe and her huſband gladly returned with him to their mean habitation at Nazareth, where he continued in a dutiful ſubjection to them: a noble inſtance to excite the duty of obedience in all children to their parents, ſince the eternal ſon of God himſelf condeſcended to practiſe it, even to his earthly parents.

In this humble privacy, the bleſſed Jeſus continued, increaſing daily in wiſdom and ſtature; and by the comelineſs of his perſon, the ſweetneſs of his diſpoſition, and the uncommon vigour of his faculties, engaged the affections of all who had the happineſs of his acquaintance. His mind being free from thoſe turbulent paſſions which diſtract the reſt of mankind, was always compoſed, always ſerene; and his countenance, at the ſame time ſedate and agreeable, indicating at once the ſtrength of his underſtanding and the goodneſs of his heart.

He was alſo poſſeſſed of ſo uncommon and prevailing an eloquence, that his hearers were often amazed at the beauty of his diſcourſes, and ſome of them forced to cry out, *Never man ſpake like this man.* In ſhort, the harmony and beauty of his diction was equal to the importance of his ſubject.

Nor did the Saviour of the world, while he remained in this mean obſcurity diſdain the toils incident to the humble ſtation of his parents; but as ſoon as his ſtrength permitted, wrought with his father at his occupation of a carpenter, leaving us a ſhining example both of filial duty and prudent induſtry. Thus he lived in a very obſcure manner; and till the time of his manifeſtation to Iſrael, ſhewed no miraculous marks to diſtinguiſh him from the reſt of mankind; the excellencies of his divinity, during the whole courſe of his private life, being concealed under the veil of human nature.

Theſe are all the particulars which the Holy Spirit has thought proper to reveal to us, concerning the private life of our great Redeemer. Our curioſity muſt, therefore, be reſtrained, the means of gratifying it being

abſolutely denied. It may, indeed, poſſibly be aſked, why the Evangeliſts have given us no account of our bleſſed Saviour's life, from the twelfth year of his age, till he began his public miniſtry, when he was near thirty; becauſe, if in this intermediate ſpace, he did any thing worthy of remembrance, it ought to have been recorded? But this queſtion will appear ſuperfluous when it is conſidered, that the end of the ſacred penmen was not ſo much to gratify our curioſity as to conſult our intereſt; and therefore, we cannot help admiring the great wiſdom of God, by whoſe inſpiration they wrote, in paſſing over the leſs active parts of our Saviour's life, which would have ſwelled their goſpels to immenſe volumes, fit only for the peruſal of the ſtudious, and thoſe who had plenty of time on their hands; whereas now, the four Goſpels make only a ſmall book, and ſeparately no more than little manuals, may be carried about with us, wherever we go; may be ſoon read over, and eaſily remembered, even by men of mean capacities, and no great leiſure: and yet they contain all the tranſactions of our Redeemer's life, which chiefly concern us to know; I mean, ſuch as relate to his mediatorial office, as coming into the world to teach us to die, and to riſe again for us; to inſtruct us in his heavenly doctrine, as our prophet; to offer himſelf a ſacrifice on the croſs as our prieſt; and to looſe the bands of death, and aſcend triumphant into heaven as our king. And tho' many particulars of the life of the ſon of God are omitted, yet *theſe are written, that ye might believe that Jeſus is the Chriſt the Son of God; and that believing, ye might have life through his name*, John xx. 31.

During the continuance of our bleſſed Saviour in his humble obſcurity at Nazareth, Auguſtus Cæſar died at Nola in Campania, after a reign of near forty years, to the inexpreſſible grief of all his ſubjects; and was ſucceeded by Tiberius, the ſon of his wife Livia, by a former huſband, but a prince of a diſpoſition quite oppoſite to his predeceſſor. He, in the ſecond year of his acceſſion to the empire, recalled Rufus from the government of Judea, and ſent Valerius Gratus to ſucceed him. Gratus having continued in Judea about eleven years, was at length recalled; and Pontius Pilate, a perſon too nearly reſembling his maſter Tiberius, of a fierce and irreconcileable ſpirit, and of a cruel and covetous diſpoſition, ſent to ſupply his place. In the firſt year of his government, John the Baptiſt began to open his commiſſion for preparing our Saviour's way before him, by preaching *the baptiſm of repentance for the remiſſion of ſins*.

The inſpired writers have been ſilent with regard to the manner in which John paſſed the former part of his life; but there is an ancient tradition in the church, that Elizabeth hearing of the ſad havock which Herod's barbarity had made among the infants of Bethlehem, fled into the wilderneſs to ſecure her child from the inhuman rage of that cruel tyrant, and there attended him with

all the care and tenderneſs of an affectionate mother. The child was about eighteen months old at the time of her flight, and within forty days after ſhe died. His father Zacharias, when he next officiated in the temple, was ſlain by Herod, for refuſing to diſcover the place of his ſon's retreat. The infant being thus deprived of all aſſiſtance from his earthly parents, the Almighty took compaſſion on him, and ſent an angel to be his guardian and ſupport, till he had attained a ſufficient age and ſtrength to provide for himſelf.

But however this be, the Evangeliſt tells us, that he lived in the deſert till the time of his public miniſtry. He reſembled the ancient prophets, particularly Elijah, in the coarſeneſs of his cloathing and the abſtemiouſneſs of his diet. His garment was made of camel's hair, probably the ſackcloth ſo often mentioned in ſcripture, worn by penitents and mourners; and his food the ſpontaneous productions of the wilderneſs. Locuſts and wild hony were his only proviſions; nor did he ever taſte wine, or any fermented liquor, but quenched his thirſt with the pure water of ſome cryſtal ſpring. This extraordinary auſterity and the air he aſſumed of the old prophets, commanded reverence from the people; and his courſe of life ſo properly adapted to the doctrine of repentance, which he preached, engaged the attention of the public: ſo that it is no wonder, that the inhabitants of the country, who now earneſtly expected the appearance of the Meſſiah, ſhould flock to him in multitudes. And as he preached the neceſſity of repentance, becauſe the kingdom of heaven was at hand, great numbers of all ranks, ſects, and characters, ſubmitted to confeſs their ſins, receive baptiſm in Jordan, and whatever elſe the prophet pleaſed to preſcribe, as neceſſary preparatives to that kingdom.

Many even of the Phariſees and Sadducees became his hearers, and ſome of them confeſſing their ſins, were baptiſed by him in Jordan: a circumſtance that greatly ſurpriſed the Baptiſt. He well knew that the Phariſees were filled with an high opinion of their own ſanctity: and the Sadducees denied, or at leaſt pretend to deny, a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments. It was therefore aſtoniſhing that either ſhould expreſs any deſire of obtaining a remiſſion of their ſins; for the former pretended to have none that required pardon; and the latter nothing to expect or apprehend after death had put a period to their exiſtence. In ſhort, he was ſurpriſed to ſee the whole nation ſo greatly moved at his threatnings, eſpecially as he was not ignorant that they firmly expected ſalvation, on account of their being the ſeed of Abraham: a conceit they were extremely fond of, and which they ſeem to have derived from a miſrepreſentation of the following paſſage: *Thus ſaith the Lord, which giveth the ſun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the ſtars for a light by night, which divideth the ſea, when the waves thereof roar; the Lord of hoſts is his name.*

If

If thoſe ordinances depart from before me, ſaith the Lord, then the ſeed of Iſrael alſo ſhall ceaſe from being a nation before me for ever. Thus ſaith the Lord, if the heaven above can be meaſured, and the foundation of the earth ſearched out beneath, I will alſo caſt off the ſeed of Iſrael, for all that they have done, ſaith the Lord, Jerem. xxxi. 35, 36, 37. But the Baptiſt, to check this fatal preſumption, called them *the offspring of vipers,* inſtead of the children of Abraham.

Perhaps both the Phariſees and Sadducees deſired to be baptized by John, in order to avoid the impending deſtruction which they expected would fall upon the enemies of the Meſſiah; being fully perſuaded that his kingdom was to be eſtabliſhed by the force of arms: and probably they expected to be partakers of the pleaſures and honours of his kingdom. But the Baptiſt, who was no ſtranger to their hypocriſy, preſumption, and wickedneſs, ſharply rebuked them; and, in alluſion to the ſerpent who deceived the mother of mankind, called them *a generation of vipers,* aſking them this pertinent queſtion, *Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?* What miracle has awakened you to a ſenſe of your danger from the impending judgment of the Almighty? I have preached the only method by which ye can eſcape the vengeance of the God of Jacob; namely, by a ſincere repentance, and the baptiſm of regeneration; and by continuing to practiſe the works that naturally flow from a penitent diſpoſition, and a benevolent heart; adding, that it was the very ſummit of folly to expect ſalvation merely on account of their being deſcended from the father of the faithful; aſſuring them that if they continued in their ſins, they would find no protection from being the children of Abraham. *And begin not to ſay within yourſelves, we have Abraham to our father, for I ſay unto you that God is able of theſe ſtones to raiſe up children unto Abraham.* That omnipotent Being who formed our firſt parents out of the duſt, and gave Abraham a ſon when his wife was ſtricken in years, can, with the ſame eaſe, raiſe up children unto that patriarch from theſe very ſtones; or rather gave him children from among the Gentiles; who, by imitating the piety and holineſs of that friend of the moſt high, ſhall ſhare with him in the bleſſing and recompence of reward. Thus did the Baptiſt at once demoliſh the whole foundation of their aſpiring hopes and fond expectations, by ſhewing that God could eaſily perform his promiſes to Abraham, even though the whole Jewiſh nation were rejected, and excluded from the ſeats of paradiſe: the ſeed principally intended by that promiſe, and which were to reſemble the ſtars of heaven for multitude, being a ſpiritual progeny.

Nor did the Baptiſt end here his exhortation. He plainly told them, that it was not enough to be convinced of their ſins, and promiſe hereafter to forſake them; it was abſolutely neceſſary to make no delay, becauſe the patience of God, was, with reſpect to them, almoſt come to its

final period. His judgments were at hand, and ready to be inflicted; and therefore if they ſtill continued in their wickedneſs, deſtruction would ſpeedily overtake them.

In ſhort, his whole exhortation was calculated to remove their prejudices, and fix in their minds this important truth, that long robes, broad phylacteries, repeated ablutions, frequent faſtings, and long prayers, were not ſufficient to find acceptance with the Almighty, whoſe favour could alone be procured by good works proceeding from faith and love.

With regard to the publicans, ſoldiers, and others who aſked his advice, he did not, like the Scribes and Phariſees, ſhun their company, becauſe many of them were perſons of infamous characters; but received them with great humanity, and ſtrenuouſly enjoined the great dictates of juſtice, charity, moderation, and contentment. And thus, by adapting his inſtructions to their ſeveral circumſtances and capacities, he prepared them for receiving the promiſed Meſſiah, whom he aſſured them would ſhortly appear, though he did not then know the particular perſon that was to ſuſtain ſo high a character.

Thus John the Baptiſt acquired a very extraordinary reputation by the auſterity of his life, the ſubject of his ſermons, the fervency of his exhortations, and the freedom, impartiality, and courage, with which he rebuked his hearers. And his fame received no ſmall addition to the reports current in Judea at that time. For the viſion which his father Zacharias had ſeen in the temple; the coming of the Eaſtern wiſemen to Jeruſalem; the prophecies of Simeon; the diſcourſes of Anna; the perplexity of Jeruſalem, and the cruelty of Herod, muſt be ſtill freſh in the minds of the people, who did not fail to apply them all to John; and they began to think that he might be himſelf the Chriſt, and were ready to acknowledge him for the expected Redeemer of Iſrael: ſo that had he aſpired to human grandeur, he might, for a time at leaſt, have poſſeſſed honours much greater than the ſons of men could pretend to claim. But the Baptiſt was too ſtrictly virtuous to aſſume what did not belong to him; and therefore plainly told his followers, that he was ſo far from being the Meſſiah, that he was no more than one of the meaneſt of his ſervants; one ſent to prepare his way before him.

While John continued at Bethabara, our bleſſed Lord thought proper to leave his retirement at Nazareth, and repair to the Baptiſt on the banks of the Jordan, where he was executing the commiſſion he had received from above, in order to be baptized by him. Indeed, he who was innocence and purity itſelf, had no occaſion for the *baptiſm of repentance*; but being willing to honour and ſanctify the inſtitution, offered himſelf to John, who, immediately by a prophetic ſpirit, knew *the Lamb of God*, acknowledged his ſuperiority, and endeavoured to decline the office. *I have need*, ſaid the pious Baptiſt, *to be baptized of thee, and comeſt thou to me?* Our bleſſed Saviour,

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And Jesus, when he was baptiz'd, went up straightway out of the water; & lo the Heavens were open'd unto him, & he saw the spirit of God descending on him like a Dove.

Matt. III v. 13. 16.

Saviour, however, did not anſwer the Baptiſt's queſtion, but deſired it might be done, becauſe it *became them to fulfil all righteouſneſs.* As if he had ſaid, Do not make any objection to performing this office; it is neceſſary for us to do every thing agreeable to the divine will, particularly in the preſent caſe, as it hath a tendency to promote the ends for which we both came into the world.

This expoſtulation removed the ſcruples of John, and he baptized the lamb of God in Jordan before a multitude of ſpectators. But having no need of inſtructions after the rite was performed, he went ſtraitway out of the water, and kneeling down on the banks of Jordan, prayed with the utmoſt fervency for the influence of the holy ſpirit, that his future miniſtry might be rendered acceptable to God, and effectually promote the ſalvation of men. His almighty father radily granted his petition; the heavens were opened to him, and an immenſe expanſe appeared, from whence the holy ſpirit, *arrayed with light as with a garment,* and in the viſible form of a dove, deſcended; and a voice from heaven was heard pronouncing theſe articulate words: *This is my beloved ſon in whom I am well pleaſed:* diſtinguiſhing him by the epithet *beloved,* from all others who had formerly been called the Sons of God. This voice reſembled that of no human organ of ſpeech; but, like the thunders of heaven, was loud and aweful, that it might not be miſtaken for the whiſpering voice of any of the multitude, who were ſpectators of this declaration of the Almighty in favour of the great Redeemer of mankind.

As the *Son of God* was one of the Meſſiah's known titles, founded on Pſalm ii. 7. and Iſaiah vii. 14. the bleſſed Jeſus was, on this occaſion, declared by Omnipotence himſelf, to be the long-expected deliverer of Iſrael. Thus all preſent had an opportunity of hearing and ſeeing the miraculous teſtimony; and were abundantly convinced that Jeſus was the true Meſſiah, *The ſtar that was to come out of Jacob, and the ſceptre that was to riſe out of Iſrael;* the *Shiloh* foretold by the patriarch Jacob; the *great prophet* by Moſes; the *Holy One* by David; the *prince of Peace* by Iſaiah; and the *Son of man* by Daniel. And, doubtleſs, all expreſſed their aſtoniſhment at ſo wonderful an event; for the pious Baptiſt no ſooner ſaw the ſpirit remaining upon the head of the immaculate Jeſus, than he cried out, *This is he of whom I ſpake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me,* John i. 15. Thus were both the propeecies of Iſaiah and David fulfilled, *Behold my ſervant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my ſoul delighteth: I have my ſpirit upon him, he ſhall bring forth judgment to the Gentile,* Iſaiah xli. 1. *Thou art my ſon, this day have I begotten thee,* Pſal. ii. 7.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

The Holy Jeſus begins his miniſtry. His temptation in the Wilderneſs. The Sanhedrim ſend meſſengers to John the Baptiſt. Chriſt's firſt miracle at Cana in Galilee.

OUR bleſſed Saviour being thus baptiſed, both with water and the Holy Ghoſt, and having in the preſence of a prodigious concourſe of people aſſembled on the banks of Jordan, received the teſtimony of John, and even that of the Almighty himſelf; began his miniſtry when he was about thirty years old, the age at which the prieſts entered on their ſacred miniſtrations in the temple.

But he did not repair to Jeruſalem, the ſeat of power, preceded by the Baptiſt, and his head ſurrounded with the blaze of divine glory. No, he withdrew into the Wilderneſs, that he might there in ſolitude and retirement, prepare himſelf, by faſting, meditation, prayer, and ſuſtaining temptations, for the great work he was going to undertake; the redemption of the human race. And hence this journey into the Wilderneſs is ſaid, by the Evangeliſt, to have been undertaken by the direction of the ſpirit of God. Nor did the bleſſed Jeſus make choice of a ſequeſtered valley ſhaded with cedars, and watered by a cryſtal ſtream iſſuing in ſolemn murmurs from a moſſy rock, enlivened by the delightful melody of the feathered choir of the groves, and the verdant carpet of nature enamelled by the moſt beautiful flowers of the ſpring: but on the contrary, an arid and barren waſte, ſurrounded by high and craggy mountains; ſo torn and diſrupted, that the earth ſeemed to have ſuffered there ſome violent convulſion, and the contents of its bowels to be wildly ſcattered over the vallies; forming a melancholy chaos of confuſion.

In this thirſty deſert, the ſon of God faſted, as Moſes and Elijah had done before him, forty days and forty nights; enjoying a continual converſe with his Almighty Father, was inſtructed in the doctrines he came to preach, and the duties of his private life; and by the miracle of a total abſtinence from food during the long interval of forty days and forty nights, demonſtrated the truth of his miſſion, and that he was a *teacher come from God.*

Nor were the painful ſenſations of hunger and thirſt the only difficulties he had to encounter in this howling wilderneſs. Satan, the great enemy of mankind, aſſaulted him with the moſt artful temptations, hoping to render abortive the benevolent intentions of heaven, and continue the ſons of men under the cruel bondage of ſin and death.

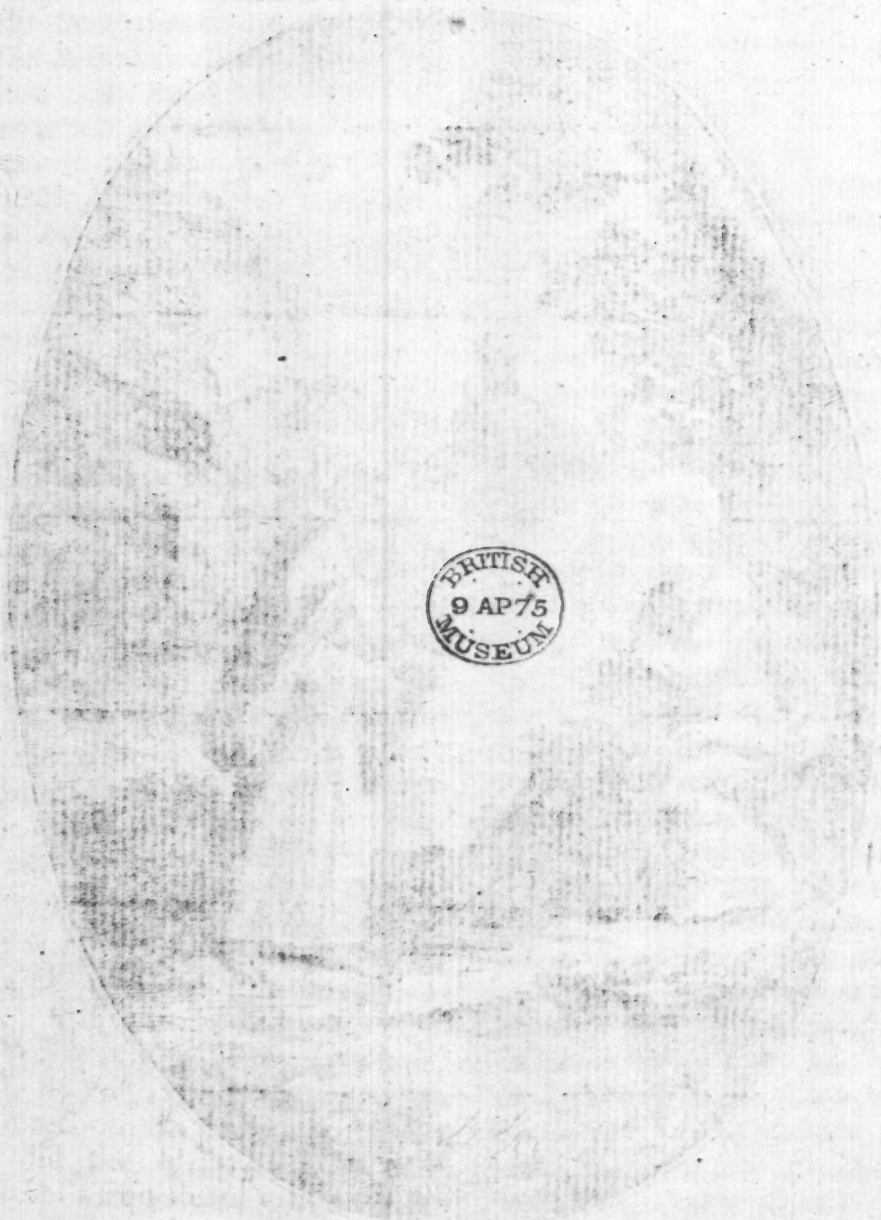
But, in order to have a juſt idea of this extraordinary event, it will be neceſſary to conſider it in two lights. 1. As it was permitted by God; and 2. As it was executed by the tempter.

If it ſhould be aſked, what reaſons could induce the Almighty to ſuffer his only begotten Son, the great Re-

Engraved for the Life of our Saviour.



Christ tempted of the Devil. Matthew IV.


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Redeemer of mankind to be tempted by the devil? It may be anſwered, that among others the following are of great weight. 1. That this benevolent patron of the human race might become a faithful and compaſſionate high-prieſt; one, who could ſuccour his people in time of adverſity; and pity them when they happened to fall into temptation. 2. The holy Jeſus, that his example might be a ſhining pattern of all the virtues, like a wiſe and valiant general, underwent himſelf all the hardſhips attending his ſervice, that we his ſoldiers might be animated to ſuſtain the like, whenever Providence pleaſed to lay them upon us. The captain of our ſalvation hath not only ſuffered poverty and reproach, but was given up to be tempted of the devil, that we might not be diſmayed at any trial of that kind we may meet with in our pilgrimage here below. 3. That our Lord might with the greater advantage begin and carry on his miniſtry, in the courſe of which he was to accompliſh the ſalvation of mankind, it was neceſſary that he ſhould previouſly vanquiſh the ſtrongeſt temptations of the old ſerpent, who had involved our firſt parents in ruin.

What different arts the ſubtle deceiver of the human race made uſe of in his attack of the Son of God, during the time of his faſting, are not recorded; and therefore, impoſſible for us to know. But when the forty days were ended, and our bleſſed Saviour was afflicted with the keen ſenſation of hunger, the tempter, to try whether he was in reality the promiſed Meſſiah, took the opportunity of asking him, why he bore the pains of hunger? Since, if he was the Son of God, he might eaſily change the very ſtones of that inhoſpitable deſert into bread; and by ſo ſtupendous a miracle have the ſatisfaction of knowing the truth of what was ſaid concerning him at his baptiſm. But our Lord repelled this temptation, by citing the words of Moſes, implying, that God, when he pleaſed, could, by extraordinary means, provide food for the ſupport and nouriſhment of the human race. *Man ſhall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God*, Luke iv. 4.

The devil being repulſed in this attempt, carried him through the air, and placing him on a pinnacle of the temple, and urged him to prove the truth of his miſſion by throwing himſelf down from thence, alledging a text out of the Pſalmiſt to encourage him. *If thou be the Son of God, caſt thyſelf down: for it is written he ſhall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they ſhall bear thee up, leſt at any time thou daſh thy foot againſt a ſtone*, Matth. iv. 6. But the bleſſed Jeſus ſoon repelled this temptation by another text of ſcripture, *Thou ſhalt not tempt the Lord thy God*, Deut. iv. 10. Thou ſhalt not provoke the Lord, either by acting contrary to what he hath commanded, or by requiring proofs of his power and veracity, when he hath already given thoſe that are ſufficient.

The devil being repulſed in theſe two attacks, had now recourſe to ambition; and carried Jeſus again

through the air to the top of an exceeding high mountain, and there ſhewed him a lively repreſentation of all the kingdoms of the world, with all their dazzling glories; telling him that theſe, with all their pomp and ſplendor, were delivered to his diſpoſal, and ſhould be given to him if he would acknowledge him for his benefactor, and worſhip him. He promiſed what God alone can give; and in return demanded what was due only to the Almighty, religious worſhip. But this was ſo great a boldneſs and blaſphemy, that it provoked the Saviour of the world to exert his divine power, and command him in a peremptory manner to be gone; adding this memento from the ſcriptures, *Thou ſhalt worſhip the Lord thy God, and him only ſhalt thou ſerve*, Deut. vi. 13. x. 20. The devil inſtantly obeyed the injunction of the Son of God, and *departed from him for a ſeaſon*: and a company of the celeſtial hoſts, diſpatched from the court of heaven, came with refreſhments for him after his triumphant combat with the great deceiver of the ſons of men. And hence we have the greateſt encouragement to exert ourſelves with vigour; for our great maſter hath ſhewed us, that the word of God is a ſufficient armour to preſerve us invulnerable againſt all the fiery darts of the adverſary.

During our Saviour's faſting and temptation in the wilderneſs, his pious and faithful forerunner John the Baptiſt, being aſſured both by the deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt, and the voice from heaven, that Jeſus was the true and long expected Meſſiah, did not fail to publiſh it openly to the multitudes that reſorted to hear his doctrine: ſo that it is no wonder that the rulers of Jeruſalem ſhould be informed of theſe ſurprizing events that had happened in Bethabara beyond Jordan. Accordingly they ſent a deputation of prieſts and levites to the Baptiſt, to demand of him who he was? whether he was the Meſſiah, or Elias, or that prophet who was to riſe from the dead, and uſher in the Meſſiah, the powerful prince ſo earneſtly expected by the whole nation of Iſrael. To theſe queſtions the Baptiſt frankly anſwered, that he was not the Meſſiah whom they expected, nor Elias, who, as they falſely imagined, would perſonally appear among them, nor any other prophet riſen from the dead: but, at the ſame time, gave them to underſtand, that though he was not Elias himſelf, yet he was that prophet intended by Iſaiah, when he called him, *The voice of one crying in the wilderneſs, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make ſtrait in the deſert a high-way for our God*, Iſ. xl. 3. This anſwer not being ſatisfactory to the prieſts and levites, they aſked him why he took upon himſelf the power of baptizing the people, if he was not the Meſſiah, nor Elias, nor any of the ancient prophets riſen from the dead? To which John anſwered, I indeed baptize to ſhew the neceſſity of repentance; but it is with water only, which can never cleanſe you from your ſins, as that waſhing predicted by the prophet Zachariah will certainly do. That efficacious bap-

baptiſm does not belong to me, but to the Meſſiah himſelf, who is now among you, tho' ye know him not, becauſe he hath not yet manifeſted himſelf to the world. Beſides, the Meſſiah is ſo far my ſuperior in dignity, that I am not worthy to be his ſervant, or even to do him the meaneſt offices. *He it is who coming after me is preferred before me, whoſe ſhoes latchet I am not worthy to unlooſe*, John i. 27.

The next day after the departure of the deputation from the Sanhedrim, Jeſus came from the Wilderneſs to Bethabara, where John was ſtill baptizing; and as his buſineſs was to lead the people to the Meſſiah, he embraced this opportunity of pointing him out to the multitude, with this remarkable expreſſion, *Behold the lamb of God which taketh away the ſins of the world.* And that the liſtening multitude ſhould not entertain any ideas that Jeſus aſſumed and John gave him the title of Meſſiah, by private concert between themſelves, he made a ſolemn declaration that he was ignorant of the pretenſions of Jeſus to that high character, till he ſaw the Holy Ghoſt deſcend viſibly and reſt upon his head. *John bare record, ſaying, I ſaw the ſpirit deſcending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that ſent me to baptize with water, the ſame ſaid unto me, upon whom thou ſhalt ſee the ſpirit deſcending and remaining on him, the ſame is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghoſt. And I ſaw and bear record that this is the Son of God*, John i. 32, 33, 34.

After this declaration of the Baptiſt, Jeſus left Bethabara, but returned thither the next day; and the Baptiſt happening to ſtand with two of his diſciples on the banks of Jordan, pointed to Jeſus as he paſſed, and repeated what he had the day before ſaid to the multitude, *Behold the lamb of God.* Probably, theſe two diſciples of John were abſent when the holy Spirit deſcended upon the Saviour of the world, and the voice from heaven declared him to be the Son of God. This declaration of their maſter, was, however, ſufficient to animate them with a deſire of being acquainted with this wonderful perſon; and accordingly they left the Baptiſt, and followed after Jeſus, who knowing their thoughts turned himſelf about, and with a ſmile of inexpreſſible ſweetneſs invited them to go with him to his houſe. St. John tells us that one of theſe two diſciples was Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, and probably he himſelf was the other; it being the cuſtom of that Evangeliſt to conceal his own name in his writings. But, however that be, the teſtimony of John, added to the proofs advanced by Chriſt himſelf in his converſation with theſe two diſciples, fully convinced Andrew, that he was the long expected Meſſiah, the great Redeemer of the human race.

Soon after Andrew found his brother Peter, and brought him to Jeſus, who immediately called him by his name, adding, that he ſhould afterwards be called Cephas, a rock; from the great ſtrength of his mind, the firmneſs of his reſolution, and

becauſe the Chriſtian church ſhould be built on his labours, as on a ſolid foundation.

The day following Jeſus finding Philip, an inhabitant of the town of Bethſaida, ſaid to him, *follow me*; and that diſciple readily obeyed the divine mandate, having before been acquainted with the character of our bleſſed Redeemer. Poſſibly Philip was one of thoſe who had ſeen the ſpirit deſcend on the head of Jeſus at his baptiſm, and heard him declared, by an awful voice from heaven, to be the beloved Son of God.

Philip finding Nathaniel, an inhabitant of Cana in Galilee, and in all probability the ſame perſon called Bartholomew, told him, that they had found the Meſſiah, the great perſon mentioned by Moſes and the prophets, *Jeſus of Nazareth the ſon of Joſeph.* Philip well knew that the Meſſiah was to be deſcended from the houſe of David, and born in the city of Bethlehem; and therefore asked this pertinent queſtion, *Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?* Is it poſſible that the great Redeemer of Iſrael can come from ſo mean and deſpicable a place as Nazareth, when the prophets have expreſsly told us, that Bethlehem, the city of David, is the happy place where the prince of peace ſhall be born? His candid diſpoſition, however, would not ſuffer him to refuſe the invitation of Philip, but go and examine before he rejected the pretenſions of Jeſus. Accordingly he followed his faithful guide to viſit the Saviour of the world, who knew his thoughts, and at his firſt approach honoured him with this amiable character, *An Iſraelite indeed, in whom there is no guile.* Nathaniel, having never before ſeen Jeſus, was ſurpriſed at his giving this deſcription of his character, and asked, how he came to know him? To which Jeſus replied, that he had ſeen him under the fig-tree. Poſſibly Nathaniel had been praying under the fig-tree, and there made ſo particular a confeſſion of his ſin, as to merit this ample character. Accordingly, when Jeſus inſinuated that he had given it to him on account of what had paſſed under the fig-ree, Nathaniel immediately perceived, that he not only knew what was done at a diſtance, but alſo, the very ſecrets of the heart; and therefore cried out with aſtoniſhment, *Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the king of Iſrael*, John i. 49. Whereupon our Saviour aſſured him, that he ſhould hereafter receive much fuller convictions of his divinity, when he ſhould ſee, as the patriarch Jacob had before in his viſion, the angels of heaven *aſcending and deſcending*, to attend the perſon, and execute the orders of the *ſon of man:* a title our bleſſed Lord took upon him, both to aſſert his humanity, and to fulfil that remarkable prophecy made concerning him by the prophet Daniel: *I ſaw in the night-viſions, and behold, one like the ſon of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the ancient of days; and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, ſhould ſerve him. His dominion is an everlaſting dominion, which*

ſhall

ſhall not paſs away, and his kingdom that which ſhall not be deſtroyed, Dan. vii. 13, 14.

Our bleſſed Saviour having thus, in the beginning of his miniſtry, given ſeveral proofs of the truth of his miſſion, and made five diſciples, departed for Galilee, where, the third day after his arrival, he was invited, with his mother and diſciples, to a marriage-feaſt at a town called Cana, a ſmall place not far from Nazareth. At this ſolemnity there happened to be a ſcarcity of wine; and his mother, who was probably a relation, or intimate acquaintance of the married pair, intereſted herſelf, being deſirous that every thing ſhould be done with decency; and accordingly applied to her ſon, hoping he might ſome way or other to ſupply this defect. She had doubtleſs been often a witneſs of his ſupernatural power, and perhaps, was now deſirous of ſeeing him work a miracle among her friends and relations. Accordingly, ſhe ſaid unto her ſon, *they have no wine.* To which he anſwered, with a gentle rebuke, *Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come.* The ſeaſon of my public miniſtry is not yet arrived. Before I work miracles in Galilee, I muſt go into Judea, and preach; for there the Baptiſt, my forerunner, hath been ſome time preparing my way.

His mother, notwithſtanding this gentle rebuke, ſtill hoped, that he would perform ſomething extraordinary; and therefore, ordered the ſervants, that they ſhould punctually perform whatever he commanded. And our bleſſed Saviour, knowing that a miracle would greatly tend to confirm the faith of his diſciples, willingly exerted his power, that his friends might reap ſome benefit from his aſtoniſhing work. Accordingly he ordered the ſervants to fill ſix water-pots, containing each about twenty gallons, with water; which was no ſooner done than the whole fluid maſs was converted into excellent wine. He then bid them bear it to the governor of the feaſt, who being ignorant of the miracle, and highly pleaſed with the flavour and richneſs of the wine, addreſſed himſelf to the bridegroom in the hearing of all the company, and commended it as preferable to what they had been drinking; at the ſame time praiſing his judicious taſte, in giving his gueſts better wine during the progreſs than at the beginning of the entertainment; a practice oppoſite to that commonly uſed, but was a ſufficient indication, that he was pleaſed with the company of his friends.

The bridegroom was doubtleſs ſurpriſed at this compliment; and on enquiry found, that this excellent wine was produced by the command of the Son of God. This miracle, which was the firſt our bleſſed Saviour performed, confirmed the faith of his diſciples, and ſpread his fame over all the neighbouring country.

The deiſts, however, who look with envy on all the actions of the Holy Jeſus, have not failed to cenſure this miracle, and even to turn it into ridicule. They might, however, have ſpared their mirth, had they

they conſidered, that the governor in his ſpeech to the bridegroom, *Every man in the beginning doth ſet forth good wine, and when men have well drunk, then that which is worſe*, John ii. 10. does not mean that any of the company were inebriated, as they would have us believe. It implies only a compariſon between the order in which he had produced his liquor, and that obſerved by other men. Beſides, they ſhould have conſidered that Jeſus did not order all the wine he had furniſhed to be drank at this ſolemnity; though, according to the cuſtom of Judea, it continued a week. On the contrary, his intention probably was to provide for the future occaſions of the married pair, by making them a ſeaſonable and valuable preſent at their nuptials, in this modeſt, though miraculous manner: and ſurely he, who at the creation of the world, made ſuch liberal proviſion for the neceſſities of men, might on a particular occaſion, when he was forming nouriſhment for the natural life of his friends, do it plentifully; becauſe the favour would be thus inhanced, and by the quantity furniſhed ſhewed his own exuberant goodneſs, and gave ſuch magnificence to the miracle, as removed it beyond all poſſibility of fraud and deception; whereas, if the quantity had been conſiderably leſs, who knows but the enemies of Chriſtianity might have affirmed, that there was no miracle here at all, but that the water was artfully carried away and wine put in its place; a deception abſolutely impoſſible in ſo large a quantity, eſpecially as the tranſmutation happened the moment the veſſels were filled.

We have therefore no occaſion to diſpute with the deiſts for the ſmallneſs of the quantity mentioned by the Evangeliſt, in the account he hath given us of the capacity of the water-pots, let them make it as large as they pleaſe. Let them ſuppoſe that it was Attic meaſure, equal to our firkin, and that each of the water-pots held three of theſe meaſures, the miracle will ſtill be decent, and in all reſpects worthy both of the wiſdom and goodneſs of him who performed it.

Our bleſſed Saviour having by this miracle confirmed the faith of his diſciples, and manifeſted his own divinity in the country where he had been brought up, he departed from Cana, and went down from Capernaum, and from thence continued his journey to Jeruſalem, that he might keep the paſſover, which was now approaching.

CHAP. V.

Jeſus drives the buyers and ſellers out of the temple. Diſputes with Nicodemus. Retires into the country of Judea, and baptizes. Converſes with a woman of Samaria. Heals the nobleman's ſon lying ſick at Capernaum. Retires to Nazareth, and is driven from thence by his countrymen.

NO ſooner was our bleſſed Saviour arrived at Jeruſalem, than he repaired to the temple, where the profanation of that ſacred place, which was filled with traders of different kinds, ſo vexed his pious ſoul, that

that he thought proper to correct the abuſe, which he had the greateſt right to do, as the temple was his own houſe. *The Lord whom ye ſeek ſhall ſuddenly come to his temple : even the meſſenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in : behold he ſhall come, ſaith the Lord of hoſts*, Mal. iii. 1.

Accordingly, having made a ſcourge of ſmall cords, he drove all the traders out of the temple, overturned the tables of the money-changers, *and ſaid unto them that ſold doves, take theſe things hence, make not my father's houſe a houſe of merchandize*, John ii. 16.

The traders were ſo intimidated by the energy of his ſpeech, and the boldneſs of the attempt, that they made no reſiſtance. But the action having all the marks of that extraordinary zeal, for which the ancient prophets were ſo remarkable, the rulers gathered themſelves together, and demanded by what authortiy he had undertaken to make ſo remarkable a reformation: deſiring at the ſame time a ſign, as an evidence of his having a commiſſion from on high. But to this the bleſſed Jeſus made no other anſwer than to refer them to the miracle of his own reſurrection. *Deſtroy*, ſays he, laying his hand on his breaſt, *this temple, and I will raiſe it up in three days*. And ſurely our bleſſed Saviour might, with the greateſt propriety, call his body a temple ; *for in it dwelt all the fullneſs of the godhead bodily*, Col. ii. 9. But the rulers, ſuppoſing he meant the magnificent temple lately finiſhed by Herod, told him it was highly improbable, that he could rebuild in three days ſo elegant a ſtructure, which had coſt forty and ſix years continued labour and toil.

But though the bleſſed Jeſus refuſed to work a miracle at the requeſt of the rulers of Iſrael, he thought proper to perform ſeveral in preſence of the people, in order to confirm the doctrines he delivered, and prove that he had received his commiſſion from on high. And as no ſupernatural works had been done among them for a long ſeaſon, tho' many were recorded in their ſacred books, it is no wonder that the people beheld them with the greateſt pleaſure, and that many of them were convinced that he was the long expected Meſſiah, the *deſire of all nations*, ſo often mentioned by the prophets. He did not, however, diſcover himſelf to be that great prophet, well-knowing that the belief of many was not ſufficiently confirmed ; and that they would again imbrace their former infidelity, when they found he was rejected by the great council of Iſrael, and did not erect a ſecular empire, as they vainly imagined would be done by the Meſſiah.

But the common people were not the only perſons that were aſtoniſhed at the miracles wrought by the Son of God. Nicodemus, one of the rulers of Iſrael, maturely conſidering his miracles, ſo ſtupendous in their nature; ſo ſolid in their proof ; ſo beneficial in their effects, and in their end ſo well deſigned to confirm a doctrine every way ſuitable to the divine attributes, and to fulfil the prophecies concerning the Meſſiah, *the Son of righteouſneſs, who was to riſe with healing in his wings*,

(Mal.

(Mal. iv. 2.) was abundantly convinced that they could have been performed only by an omnipotent hand; and thence, like many of his countrymen, was led to think, that Jeſus was in reality the promiſed Meſſiah. But, on the other hand, the meanneſs of his appearance, ſo very oppoſite to the grand ideas the deſcendants of Jacob had ſo long, and ſo fondly entertained of this powerful ſon of David, whom they expected would place his throne in Jeruſalem, and extend his empire to the utmoſt parts of the earth, occaſioned doubts which Nicodemus could not reſolve. In this ſtate of uncertainty he determined to pay a viſit to Jeſus, hoping, by a private converſation, to remove all theſe difficulties, and fix his opinion on the ſolid baſis of truth. Accordingly he repaired to Jeſus, but choſe the night, that hid beneath the ſable veil of darkneſs, his viſit might be concealed from the other members of the council, who were, in general, the declared enemies of our dear Redeemer. At his entrance, he cried out, *Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do theſe miracles that thou doeſt, except God be with him*, John iii. 2. Nicodemus was ſufficiently convinced that Jeſus was ſent from God; but that did not prove him to be the Meſſiah, eſpecially as he had not called himſelf by that name, at leaſt in his hearing. To this our bleſſed Saviour immediately anſwered, *Verily, verily I ſay unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot ſee the kingdom of God.* Though the luſtre of my miracles forces thee to acknowledge that I have received my commiſſion from on high, yet thou art not convinced that I am the Meſſiah; becauſe thou doſt not ſee me ſurrounded with the ſplendor of an earthly prince: but believe me, unleſs a man be renewed in the ſpirit of his mind, he cannot diſcern the evidence of my miſſion, who am come to erect the kingdom of God; conſequently he cannot ſee that kingdom, cannot acknowledge it, cannot be a member of it. This was a new doctrine to Nicodemus; he did not expect to hear that the ſeed of Abraham needed a ſecond generation and birth, to render them the children of God; and therefore asked, with great earneſtneſs, *How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter a ſecond time into his mother's womb, and be born?* Jeſus replied, he was not ſpeaking of a natural, but of a ſpiritual generation. *Except a man be born of water and of the ſpirit, he cannot ſee the kingdom of God.* Unleſs a man embrace the Chriſtian religion when offered to him, and *waſh away his ſins in the laver of regeneration*, he cannot be a member of the kingdom of God here, nor a partaker of the glory in the heavenly manſions, when time ſhall have given place to eternity. Nothing, adds the bleſſed Jeſus, can excel the origin from whence it ſprung; and therefore, if it were poſſible for a perſon to be born a ſecond time of his earthly parents, he would not thence become holy and immortal, or qualified for the kingdom of God. He would ſtill be the ſame ſinful and corruptible creature as before, becauſe he would

ſtill be indued with all the properties and imperfections of human nature; and conſequently be ſtill at the ſame diſtance from a happy immortality. *That which is born of the fleſh is fleſh, and that which is born of the ſpirit is ſpirit.* You muſt, in order to your being admitted into the kingdom of God, have a ſpiritual and immortal nature conferred upon you; and this can only be done by the renewing of the ſpirit. *Marvel not that I ſaid unto thee, ye muſt be born again.* Your being the ſeed of Abraham, and even the rulers and governors of Iſrael, will be of no conſequence: you muſt all, in this ſpiritual ſenſe, be born again.

There may, indeed, be great difficulty in underſtanding the manner in which this can be done: but that is no reaſon why it ſhould be diſbelieved; ſince there are in nature ſeveral ſurpriſing effects which you muſt acknowledge, though you cannot explain their cauſes. For inſtance, *The wind bloweth where it liſteth, and thou heareſt the ſound thereof, but canſt not tell whence it cometh, and whether it goeth: ſo is every one that is* begotten and *born of the ſpirit*, John iii. 8.

Theſe arguments were undeniable; but Nicodemus could not underſtand how the ſeed of Abraham, who had been always acknowledged the people of God, ſhould ſtand in need of regeneration, in order to inherit the kingdom of heaven; and accordingly he again aſked, *How can theſe things be?* Our bleſſed Saviour expreſſed his ſurpriſe at hearing Nicodemus aſk this queſtion; for he had only converſed with him in the common dialect of the divinity ſchools of Jeruſalem; and therefore might well aſk him this pertinent queſtion: *Art thou a maſter in Iſrael, and knoweſt not theſe things?* Doſt thou pretend to teach the deſcendants of Jacob, and art thyſelf ſo groſsly ignorant of this fundamental truth, which is conſtantly taught to every proſelyte, when he becomes a member of the Jewiſh religion? His earthly parents and relations are no longer conſidered as ſuch; and the proſelyte himſelf ſaid, by the change of his religion, to have received a new ſoul. The bleſſed Jeſus added, that the perſon who taught this doctrine of a new birth, was certain of its truth, and therefore he was culpable in rejecting it. And if theſe obvious truths relating to the ſpiritual nature of the kingdom of God, and the qualifications of his ſubjects, are ſo difficult to be conceived, how will ye be able to believe the more ſublime doctrines of the goſpel I am come to preach to the ſons of men? In the mean time thou mayſt ſecurely liſten to my inſtructions; for I am veſted with an authority, and endued with gifts far ſuperior to any of the ancient prophets ſent by Omnipotence to reform a ſinful people. Moſes, your great law-giver, did not aſcend into heaven; the top of Mount Sinai only terminated his journey: whereas the ſon of man, who came down from heaven with an extraordinary commiſſion to reveal the will of the Almighty to the children of men, he only hath aſcended up to heaven; hath been favoured with the cleareſt and moſt extenſive views of

ſpiritual things; hath penetrated into the receſſes of the divine councils: Nay, is at preſent in heaven, is with God, is conſcious of all his gracious purpoſes to the human race; and, conſequently muſt be a meſſenger of much higher dignity than Moſes, or any of the ancient prophets.

Our great Redeemer was alſo deſirous of removing that prejudice ſo long rooted in the minds of the Jews, with regard to the temporal power of the Meſſiah, and his appearing as an illuſtrious and powerful conqueror of all the kingdoms of the earth. In order to this, he ſhewed Nicodemus, that it was conformable both to the doctrine of Moſes, and the counſels of heaven, that the Meſſiah ſhould, in this world, be expoſed to the greateſt poverty, miſeries, and diſtreſs; and conſequently, that his conqueſts were to be of a ſpiritual nature, and his throne eſtabliſhed, not in the earthly but the heavenly Jeruſalem, whoſe gates he was ſent to open to all the children of men. But this could only be performed with his blood; and that the Son of God, who was made in the ſimilitude of ſinful fleſh, would, by his death on the croſs, free all true penitents from their ſins, and render them inhabitants of a bliſsful eternity.

This unſpeakable happineſs, the bleſſed Jeſus aſſured Nicodemus, the children of men owed to the inexpreſſible love of God the father, who ſo ardently deſired their ſalvation, that he ſent his only begotten ſon into the world to purchaſe for them eternal life: and hence juſtly concluded, that thoſe who believed in him ſhould be ſaved, and thoſe who believed not, condemned; becauſe their unbelief was owing to their own wickedneſs, and not to any defect in the proofs of his miſſion, which were abundantly ſufficient to ſatisfy every unprejudiced mind. *He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not, is condemned already; becauſe he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten ſon of God*, John iii. 18, 19.

Nicodemus was greatly affected with this pathetic diſcourſe, and convinced that Jeſus was not only *a teacher come from God*, but the great Redeemer of Iſrael; and conſtantly afterwards defended him in the Sanhedrim: and when the Jews had put him to a cruel, and ignominious death, he, in concert with Joſeph of Arimathea, beſtowed on him the honours of a funeral, when all the reſt of his followers had forſaken him.

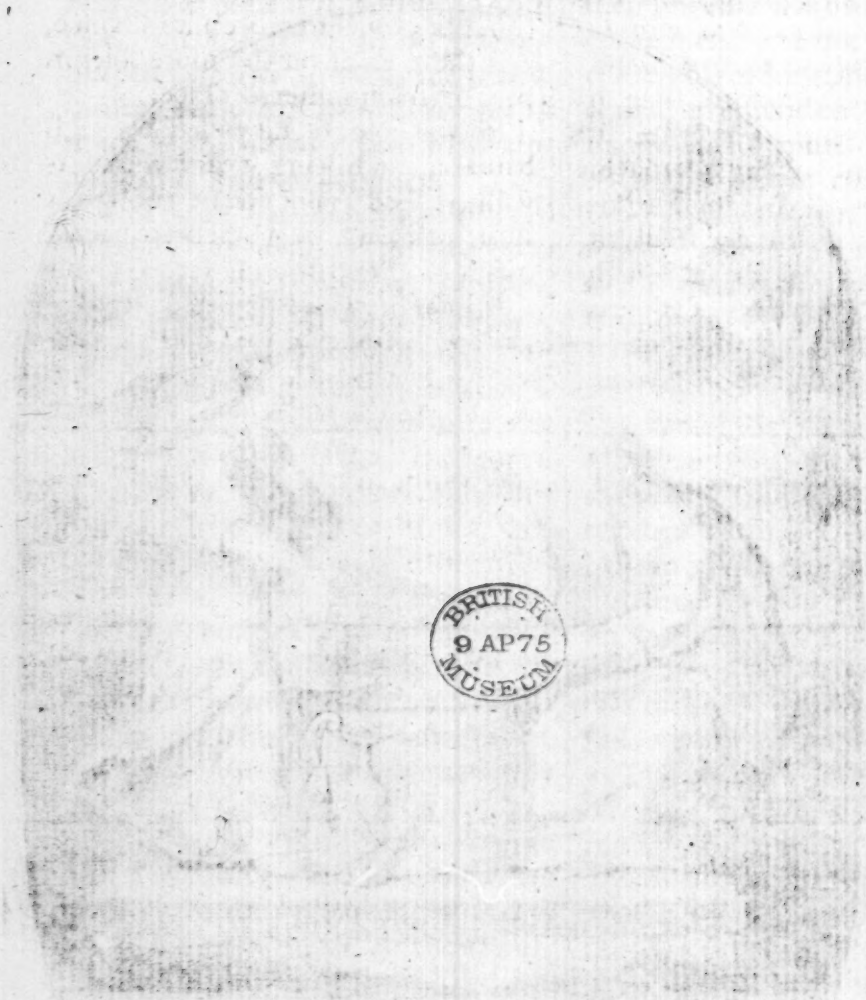
The paſſover being ended, Jeſus left Jeruſalem, and retired into the remote parts of Judea, probably to Bethabara, where the Baptiſt firſt opened his commiſſion, and where the voice of Omnipotence himſelf had declared our bleſſed Saviour to be the Son of God. Here the holy Jeſus tarried a conſiderable time, for his diſciples baptized great numbers of people, and his fame was ſpread through all the country; from whence certain Jews took occaſion to diſpute with the diſciples of John, whether the baptiſm of Jeſus was not preferable to that of their maſter? But being unable of themſelves to decide this controverſy, they appealed to John. On which the pious

Baptiſt

Engravd for the Life of our Saviour.



Jesus & the Woman of Samaria


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Baptiſt reminded his diſciples how frequently he had told them that the perſon they mentioned was the Meſſiah, whom God had ſent into the world for the ſalvation of mankind; and he himſelf no more than his herald, being ſent to prepare his way before him. Adding, that his own miniſtry was now going to decline, as the glory of the morning-ſtar decreaſes, when the radiant ſun appears in the chambers of the eaſt. The Baptiſt alſo told his diſciples many other particulars, tending to prove Jeſus to be the Son of God, cloſing his important commiſſion with theſe remarkable words: *He that believeth on the Son hath everlaſting life; but he that believeth not in the Son, ſhall not ſee life; but the wrath of God abideth on him*, John iii. 36.

Soon after this memorable declaration, the Baptiſt left the Wilderneſs of Judea, and repaired into Galilee, often viſiting the court of Herod, who paid great regard to his precepts; and took a particular delight in his company. But the Baptiſt, who was too ſtrictly virtuous to let any enormities eſcape a ſevere animadverſion, reproved Herod himſelf for cohabiting with Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, who was ſtill living. This ſo exaſperated that ambitious woman, that ſhe prevailed upon Herod to caſt John into priſon, fully intending to deſtroy him, whenever a proper opportunity offered.

During theſe tranſactions, our Saviour continued in the Wilderneſs of Judea, where great multitudes reſorted to him; which, together with the fame of his miracles, and the number of his diſciples, excited the envy of the Phariſees; ſo that he thought proper to retire into Galilee, and there enter on the more ſolemn part of his miniſterial office.

In this journey he paſſed through Samaria, and being weary with travelling, and faint from the great heat, ſat down by a celebrated well, given by the patriarch Jacob to his ſon Joſeph, while his diſciples repaired to the city to purchaſe proviſions.

During their abſence, a woman of Samaria came with her pitcher to the well to draw water; and Jeſus being thirſty, deſired ſhe would give him ſome to drink. This requeſt ſurpriſed the woman, who knowing him to be a Jew, could not comprehend how he could deſire any favour from her, who was an inhabitant of Samaria; the Jews diſdaining to have any dealings with the people of that city. Little did the woman think that no leſs a perſon than the Son of God, requeſted this ſmall favour at her hands; but his condeſcenſion and benevolence were on this occaſion ſo remarkable, that though ſhe was a perſon of an infamous character, and he himſelf almoſt parched with thirſt, yet he delayed the gratification of that innocent appetite, in order to lead her, who was ſpiritually dead, to the living waters of life eternal. Accordingly, he told her that had ſhe known the perſon who deſired of her a draught of water, ſhe would very readily have granted his requeſt, and at the ſame aſked and received from him *living water*. This ſurpriſed the

the woman, who taking his words in the common acceptation, which, in the language of Judea, implied water flowing from a perpetual ſpring, could not conceive how it was poſſible for him to procure ſuch in that arid plain; and therefore, aſked him, if he conſidered himſelf as greater, or in higher favour with Omnipotence, than the patriarch Jacob, who was obliged to dig this well in order to provide water for himſelf and his family, for he muſt command a ſpring to burſt out from the thirſty ſoil. The holy Jeſus anſwered, that he who drank of the water of the well of Jacob, ſhould thirſt again; but whoſoever drank of the water that he would give him would never thirſt; for it would be in him a well of water ſpringing up to everlaſting life. Thus did our bleſſed Saviour, under the allegory of living or ſpringing water, from the incident of ſitting near the well of Jacob, deſcribe, in the moſt beautiful manner, the efficacy of divine grace; and at the ſame time repreſented the conſequences flowing from it, the plenitude and perpetuity of celeſtial joys.

But the woman, ſtill underſtanding his words in their natural ſenſe, attempted to turn his ſublime diſcourſe into ridicule, deſiring him to give her that *living water*, that ſhe might not again feel the uneaſy ſenſations of thirſt, nor be forced to come daily to the well for water. But this ſarcaſtical ſpeech was immediately checked by the Redeemer of mankind, who ſoon convinced her, he was no ſtranger to her true character, by enumerating the many adulteries ſhe had committed, and the infamous ſtate in which ſhe now lived. So particular an account of her life from an entire ſtranger, ſufficiently humbled her pride, and at the ſame time convinced her that he muſt enjoy a particular converſe with heaven. In order therefore to change the diſcourſe from ſo unwelcome a ſubject, ſhe propoſed to him the great queſtion ſo long, and ſo warmly debated between the Jews and the Samaritans; namely, whether Mount Gerizim or Jeruſalem, was the place appointed by God to worſhip and ſacrifice? To this our Saviour replied, that the queſtion was of no great moment, ſince the time was almoſt arrived, when a final period would be put to the worſhip both at Jeruſalem and Mount Gerizim; tho' Jeruſalem was the proper place of worſhip, the Almighty having choſen that city for his dwelling-place. And as a further anſwer to this famous queſtion, added, *God is a ſpirit and they that worſhip him, muſt worſhip him in ſpirit and in truth*, John iv. 23. God is the ſupreme mind or intelligence, who actuates the whole, and ſees the thoughts of all the creatures that inhabit the univerſe; and conſequently may be worſhipped in every corner of the earth. But then this worſhip does not conſiſt of the blood of beaſts, but of faith and love; and wherever this ſpiritual work is performed, it will be accepted by that almighty Being who called the univerſe from nothing, and fills, like clouds of ſweet-ſmelling incenſe, the courts of heaven. The woman,

who was greatly affected by this diſcourſe, acknowledged that the Meſſiah was to be born among the Jews, but hoped that the Samaritans alſo would ſhare in his favours; and be inſtructed by the wiſdom he would receive from on high. To which the bleſſed Jeſus anſwered, that he who now talked with her, was no other than the perſon ſhe mentioned, the long expected Meſſiah.

While our Saviour continued talking with the woman, his diſciples returned, and approached him at the very time when he told the woman that he was the Meſſiah. His condeſcenſion in converſing with an inhabitant of Samaria, and even of inſtructing her in the doctrines of religion, raiſed their aſtoniſhment, tho' none preſumed to aſk him, why he converſed with one who was an enemy to the Jews and the worſhip in the temple at Jeruſalem? But the woman hearing Jeſus call himſelf the Meſſiah, left her pitcher, and ran into the city, to publiſh the glad tidings, that the great deliverer of mankind was then ſitting by the well of Jacob; and had told her all the ſecret tranſactions of her life. This report aſtoniſhed the Samaritans, and at the ſame time rouſed their curioſity to ſee a perſon foretold by Moſes and the prophets, and of whoſe appearance there was then ſo univerſal an expectation.

During theſe tranſactions in the city, the diſciples ſet before their maſter the proviſions they had purchaſed; but he, wholly abſorbed in meditation, refuſed the refreſhment ſo highly requiſite, telling them he had *meat to eat that they knew nothing of*. This unexpected anſwer ſurpriſed his diſciples, who underſtanding his words in their natural ſenſe, aſked one another, whether any perſon had, during their abſence, ſupplied him with proviſions? But Jeſus ſoon explained the myſtery by telling them, that he did not mean natural but ſpiritual food; that, to execute the commiſſion he had received from his father, was far better to him than meat or drink; and the ſatisfaction he was going to receive from the converſion of the Samaritans, much greater than any ſenſual enjoyment.

Several of the inhabitants of Samaria were now near Jeſus, who lifting up his eyes, and ſeeing the ways crouded with people coming to him from the city, he ſtretched out his benevolent hand towards them, and addreſſed his diſciples in the following manner: *Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harveſt? Behold, I ſay unto you, Lift up your eyes and look on the fields; for they are white already to harveſt*, John iv. 35. Behold yonder multitudes how they are thronging to hear the word, which has only a few minutes been ſown in their hearts! It is not therefore always neceſſary to wait with patience for the effect; for it ſometimes immediately follows the cauſe. To gather this ſpiritual harveſt, and finiſh the work of him that ſent me, is my proper food: adding, for the encouragement of his diſciples; As you have laboured with me in this harveſt of ſouls, ſo ſhall you participate in the great re-

recompence of eternal rewards: *He that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that ſoweth, and he that reapeth, may rejoice together*, John iv. 36.

Many of the Samaritans had been ſo affected at the words of the woman, that they were fully perſuaded Jeſus could be no other than the great Meſſiah; accordingly their firſt requeſt was, that he would deign to take up his reſidence in their city. And the compaſſionate Redeemer of the human race ſo far complied, as to ſtay with them two days, an interval which he ſpent in preaching to them the kingdom of God; ſo that the greateſt part of the city embraced the doctrine of the goſpel, and at his departure ſaid unto the woman, *Now we believe, not becauſe of thy ſaying: for we have heard him ourſelves, and know that this is indeed the Chriſt, the Saviour of the world*, John iv. 42.

This heavenly work being finiſhed in Samaria, Jeſus continued his journey to Galilee, to exerciſe his miniſtry, and preach there the kingdom of God; telling his diſciples, that the time was now accompliſhed, which had been predetermined by Omnipotence, for erecting the happy kingdom of the prince of peace; and therefore, the Moſaic ceremonies were no longer obligatory, righteouſneſs alone being now required from the children of men.

Jeſus had performed ſeveral miracles at Jeruſalem during the paſſover, at which the inhabitnats of Galilee were preſent. His preaching was therefore at firſt attended with great ſucceſs, for they liſtened attentively to his doctrine, and received it with great kindneſs and courteſy; eſpecially, the people of Cana, where he had turned the water into wine.

While he abode in that city, a nobleman of Capernaum came to him, requeſting, with great humility and reverence, that he would come down and heal his ſon, who was at the point of death. Our bleſſed Saviour readily complied with the latter part of his requeſt; but to remove a prejudice they had conceived, that it was neceſſary to be perſonally preſent in order to reſtore the ſick perſon to health, refuſed to go down to Capernaum, diſmiſſing the father, with this aſſurance, that his ſon was reſtored to health. *Go thy way; thy ſon liveth*, John iv. 50. The nobleman obeyed the word of Jeſus, and immediately departed for his own houſe; but before his arrival he was met by his ſervants with the joyful news, that his ſon was recovered. Upon this the father enquired at what time they perceived an alteration for the better; and from their anſwer was ſatisfied that immediately after the words were ſpoken by the bleſſed Jeſus, the *fever left him*, and he was recovered in a miraculous manner. This amazing inſtance of his power and goodneſs abundantly convinced the nobleman and his family, that Jeſus was the true Meſſiah, the great prophet ſo long promiſed to the world.

After ſome ſtay in the city and neighbourhood of Cana, Jeſus went to Nazareth, where he ſpent the greateſt part of his youth; and, as his

his conſtant cuſtom was, went to the ſynagogue on the ſabbath-day, and read that celebrated prediction of the Meſſiah in the prophet Iſaiah, *The ſpirit of the Lord is upon me, becauſe he hath anointed me to preach the goſpel to the poor, he hath ſent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of ſight to the blind, to ſet at liberty thoſe that are bruiſed, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord*, Luke iv. 18, 19. It ſhould be remembered that our bleſſed Saviour read this paſſage in the original Hebrew, which was then a dead language; and as he had never been taught letters, could do it only by inſpiration from above. But he did more; he explained the paſſage with ſuch ſtrength of reaſon, and beauty of expreſſion, that the inhabitants of Nazareth, who well knew he had never been initiated into the rudiments of learning, heard him with aſtoniſhment. But as he had performed no miracle in their city, they were offended at him. Perhaps they thought the place of his reſidence ſhould have been his peculiar care; and as he could with a ſingle word heal the ſick at a diſtance, not a ſingle perſon in Nazareth ſhould have been afflicted with any kind of diſeaſe. That they really entertained ſentiments of this kind, ſeems plain from our Saviour's own words: *Ye will ſurely ſay to me, phyſician heal thyſelf: whatever we have had done in Capernaum, do alſo here in thy country*, evidently alluding to the great and benevolent miracle he had wrought on the nobleman's ſon. But the holy Jeſus, by enumerating the miracles Elijah had done in behalf of the widow of Serepta, who was a heathen and the inhabitant of an idolatrous city, in the time of famine, when many widows in Iſrael periſhed with hunger; and of Naaman the Syrian, who was cured of his leproſy by the prophet Eliſha, when numbers of Jews afflicted with the ſame loathſome diſeaſe, were ſuffered to continue in their uncleanneſs; ſufficiently proved, that the prophets had, on ſome extraordinary occaſions, wrought miracles in favour of thoſe whom the Iſraelites, from a fond conceit of their being the peculiar favourites of heaven, judged unworthy of ſuch marks of particuar favour. This anſwer ſo highly provoked the aſſembly, that forgetting the ſanctity of the ſabbath, they hurried him through the ſtreets *to the brow of the hill whereon their city was built*, intending to caſt him headlong down the precipice; but the Son of God defeated their cruel intentions, by rendering himſelf inviſible, and withdrawing from the fury of theſe wretched people.

CHAP. VI.

Jeſus repairs to Capernaum. Calls ſeveral diſciples. Preaches in Galilee; and delivers his celebrated Sermon on the Mount.

THE barbarous treatment of the Nazarenes induced our bleſſed Saviour to remove from them, and fix his habitation in Capernaum, the capital of Galilee, and from being built on the borders of the lake of Geneſareth, a place highly con-

venient for his deſigns. For beſides the numerous inhabitants of that city, the trading towns on the Lake were crowded with ſtrangers; who after hearing the doctrine of the goſpel preached hy the great Redeemer of mankind, would not fail to ſpread, in their reſpective countries, the happy tidings of ſalvation.

It was abſolutely neceſſary that he ſhould ſpend a conſiderable time in preaching and working miracles, to confirm his miſſion, and inſtruct his diſciples in the doctrine they were afterwards to publiſh to the whole world: But this could not be done at Jeruſalem, the reſidence of the Scribes and Phariſees, whoſe ambition would never have ſuffered ſo celebrated a teacher as Jeſus to reſide among them: theſe countries were, therefore, the only places where he could, for any time, take up his reſidence, and inſtruct the people in ſuch a manner, as to anſwer the great intention of his coming into the world.

If it ſhould be aſked why he choſe Capernaum preferably to all the other places ſituated on the Lake of Geneſareth? the anſwer is eaſy. He was certain of being favourably received by the inhabitants of that city. He had gained the friendſhip of the principal family by reſtoring to health a favourite child, who, to all human appearance, was juſt ſtepping into the chambers of the grave. Nor was this family the only friends he had in that city; ſo ſtupendous a miracle could not fail of procuring the love and eſteem of all the relations of that noble family: beſides, ſo benevolent and ſurprizing a miracle muſt have conciliated the reſpect of all the inhabitants of Capernaum, who could not be ignorant of ſo remarkable an event. And accordingly our Saviour ſpent here and in other places bordering on the Lake two or three years of his public life; ſo that the inhabitants of theſe parts enjoyed a conſiderable ſhare of the bleſſed company, and divine inſtructions of the Son of God.

Before I procced farther, it may not be amiſs to give a ſhort deſcription of this celebrated Lake, called in the Old Teſtament the Sea of Chinnereth; but in the New it has three different appellations, being called the ſea of Galilee, from the province of Galilee in general; the ſea of Tiberias, from a city of that name on its weſtern ſhore; and the Lake of Geneſareth, from a particular tract of Galilee, extending a conſiderable way along its weſtern ſide.

Joſephus ſays, it is an hundred furlongs in length and forty in breadth. The bottom is of gravel, which renders the water both of a good colour and taſte. It is ſofter than either fountain or river-water; and, at the ſame time ſo cold, that it will not grow warm though expoſed to the rays of the ſun, in the very hotteſt ſeaſon of the year. The river Jordan runs through the midſt of it, which ſtocks it with a great variety of fiſh, of a peculiar form and flavour, not found in any other place.

The countries ſurrounding this Lake were large, fertile, and populous, eſpecially the two Galilees, which, according to Joſephus, had a

great many towns, and a multitude of villages, the leaſt of which contained fifteen hundred ſouls. On the eaſt ſide were the cities of Chorazin, Bethſaida, Gadara, and Hippon; on the weſt, Capernaum, Tiberias, and Tarrichea. And from all theſe advantages it was a common ſaying among the Jews, that God loved the Sea of Galilee above all other ſeas. An obſervation ſtrictly juſt, if to theſe we add its greateſt advantage, namely, that this ſea, above all others, was frequently honoured with the divine preſence of the great Redeemer of mankind, while he dwelt at Capernaum, and even once after he aroſe from the dead.

During the reſidence of our bleſſed Saviour at Capernaum, he uſually taught in the ſynagogues on the ſabbath-day, preaching with ſuch energy of power, as greatly aſtoniſhed the whole congregation. He did not, however, conſtantly confine himſelf to that city, the adjacent country was often bleſſed with his preſence, and cheered with the heavenly words of his mouth.

In one of theſe excurſions he called Simon and Andrew, who were following their occupation of fiſhing on the Lake, to accompany him. Theſe diſciples, who had before been acquainted with him, readily obeyed the heavenly mandate, and followed the Saviour of the world. Soon after he ſaw James and John, who were alſo fiſhing on the Lake, and called them alſo. Nor did they heſitate to follow the great Redeemer of mankind; and, from their ready compliance, there is reaſon to believe, that they, as well as Simon and Andrew, were acquainted with Jeſus at Jordan; unleſs we ſuppoſe, which is far from being improbable, that their readineſs proceeded from the ſecret energy of his power upon their minds. But however this be, the four diſciples accompanied our bleſſed Saviour to Capernaum, and ſoon after to different parts of Galilee.

What time the bleſſed Jeſus ſpent in this tour is uncertain; all the Evangeliſts have mentioned is, that he wrought a great number of miracles on diſeaſed perſons; and that the fame of theſe wonderful works drew people from Galilee, Jeruſalem, Judea, and beyond Jordan. Nor was the knowledge of theſe miracles concealed from the heathens, particularly the inhabitants of Syria; for they alſo brought their ſick to Galilee to be healed by him. Conſequently the time our bleſſed Saviour ſpent in theſe tours muſt have been conſiderable, though the Evangeliſts have ſaid very little concerning it.

But whatever time was ſpent in theſe benevolent actions, the vaſt multitudes which flocked to him from every quarter, moved his compaſſion towards them, who were bewildered in the darkneſs of ignorance, and determined him to preach to them *the words of eternal life*.

Accordingly he aſcended a mountain in that neighbourhood; and placing himſelf on an eminence from whence he could be heard by the throngs of people attending him, he inculcated, in an amazingly pathetic manner, the moſt important points of religion. But, alas! they were coldly

coldly received, becauſe many of them were directly oppoſite to the ſtanding precepts delivered by the Scribes and Phariſees. Surely theſe people, who had ſeen the bleſſed Jeſus perform ſo many benevolent actions to the poor, the diſeaſed and the maimed, might have entertained a more favourable opinion of his doctrine, and known that ſo compaſſionate and powerful a perſon, muſt have been actuated by the ſpirit of God; and, conſequently, that the doctrine he taught was really di-ine.

He began his heavenly diſcourſe with the doctrine of happineſs, a ſubject which the teachers of wiſdom have always conſidered as the principal object in morals, and employed their utmoſt abilities to convey a clear idea of it to their diſciples, but differed very remarkably with regard to the particulars in which it conſiſted. The Jews were, in general, perſuaded, that the enjoyments of ſenſe were the ſovereign good. Riches, conqueſt, liberty, mirth, women, fame, revenge, and other things of the ſame kind, afforded them ſuch pleaſures, that they wiſhed for no better in the Meſſiah's kingdom, which they all conſidered as a ſecular one; and that a golden, inſtead of a *ſceptre of righteouſneſs*, would have been *the ſceptre of his kingdom*. Nay, the very diſciples themſelves long retained this notion, and firſt followed him with a view of obtaining honours, profits, and pleaſures in their poſts under him.

The bleſſed Jeſus, therefore, to ſhew his hearers in general, and his diſciples in particular, the groſsneſs of their error, declared that the higheſt happineſs of men conſiſts in the graces of the ſpirit, becauſe from the poſſeſſion and exerciſe of them the pureſt pleaſures reſult; pleaſures, which ſatisfy even the Almighty himſelf, and conſtitute his ineffable felicity. The rich, the great, the proud, ſaid the great Redeemer of mankind, in whom the wiſdom of God was fully diſplayed, are not happy, as you imagine; they are always wiſhing for what they cannot obtain; and their diſappointments are poiſoned arrows feſtering in their breaſts. On the contrary, the poor in ſpirit are the truly happy, who diſcharge the duties of their ſtation, whatever it be, with virtue and integrity; and bleſs the omnipotent hand who faſhioned them in the womb, and guards them from all dangers in this humble vale of ſorrow and diſtreſs: and though they are excluded from enjoying an earthly kingdom, yet they have a much better reſerved for them eternal in the heavens. *Bleſſed are the poor in ſpirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

Nor are the merry and the gay, the happy race of mortals: but, on the contrary, the afflicted; provided they rightly improve their afflictions; that is, if they are excited by them to mourn for their ſins, forſake their wicked courſes, and ſeek a better country. For they ſhall here enjoy the conſolation, that their ſins are forgiven; and, after paſſing through the valley of the ſhadow of death, the fruition of eternal joys. *Bleſſed are they that mourn; for they ſhall be comforted.*

And

And ſurely nothing can be more true, than this heavenly aphoriſm; for what has ſo great a power to turn the feet of the ſons of men into the path of virtue, as affliction? Has not affliction a natural tendency to give mankind a diſtaſte to the pleaſures of the world, and convince him they are nothing more than *vanity and vexation of ſpirit*; and conſequently, to demonſtrate that they muſt ſeek for happineſs in things more ſolid and permanent than any in this vale of tears? Affliction awakens the moſt ſerious thoughts in the mind; compoſes it into a grave and ſettled frame, very different from the levity inſpired by proſperity; gives it a fellow-feeling of the ſorrows of others; and makes it thoroughly ſenſible of the danger of departing from God, the ſource and centre of all its joys.

Nor are the paſſionate happy; but, on the contrary, the meek; thoſe who have ſubdued their tempers, can patiently bear provocation, and are ſtrangers to that deſtructive paſſion, envy. The meek ſhall inherit the choiceſt bleſſings of the preſent life; for, indeed, they principally flow from that benevolent and heavenly temper of mind. Meekneſs conſiſts in the moderation of our paſſions; and, therefore, renders a perſon lovely and venerable in the eyes of his fellow-mortals, and thence he poſſeſſes their ſincere eſteem; while the paſſionate and envious man is conſidered as deſpicable, tho' adorned with the robe of honour, and dignified with the moſt ample poſ-

ſeſſions. *Bleſſed are the meek: for they ſhall inherit the earth.*

It is common for ſhort-ſighted mortals to conſider thoſe men as happy, who enjoy the pleaſures of this life, by rioting in luxury and exceſs. But this is far from being true; on the contrary, thoſe are the truly happy who have the moſt vehement deſire of treading the paths of virtue and religion. For they, by the aſſiſtance of the holy ſpirit, ſhall obtain every thing they deſire; and ſhall be happy here in the practice of righteouſneſs; and after this tranſitoy life is ended, be received into the bliſsful manſions of the heavenly Canaan. *Bleſſed are they that hunger and thirſt after righteouſneſs: for they ſhall be filled.*

Happineſs is not the portion of thoſe who reſent injuries, however ſucceſsfully, but of thoſe who forgive them; and being of a humane and beneficent diſpoſition, rejoice when they can perform a benevolent action, eſpecially to their fellow-mortals in diſtreſs. The merciful ſhall ſee themſelves recompenſed even in this life: for they ſhall find, after many days, the bread they have caſt upon the waters of affliction, returned tenfold into their boſom. And ſurely nothing can ſurpaſs the pleaſure felt by a generous mind at having relieved a brother, when preſſed beneath a load of misfortunes; the pleaſure is god-like, it is divine. *Bleſſed are the merciful: for they ſhall obtain mercy.*

Nor does happineſs conſiſt in ſenſual pleaſures; and therefore, cannot

be

be enjoyed by thoſe who ſeek it in the goods of fortune: It is the lot of thoſe who having mortified their carnal appetites to enjoy an inward purity of mind. With what delight do we behold the glories of the ſun, and contemplate the beautiful ſcenes of nature that ſurround us? But what proportion has this to the ineffable delights that muſt fill the minds of thoſe who behold the great creator himſelf, who called the whole univerſe from nothing, and ſtill ſupports it with the word of his power? *Bleſſed are the pure in heart: for they ſhall ſee God.*

The tyrants and conquerors of the earth, who diſturb the peace of mankind, are far from happy; it falls to the ſhare of thoſe who love their fellow-creatures, and do all in their power to promote peace and harmony among the children of men. For they imitate the greateſt perfection of their Maker; and therefore, ſhall be acknowledged by him for his children, and participate of his happineſs. *Bleſſed are the peace-makers: for they ſhall be called the children of God.*

Happineſs does not flow from liberty and eaſe, if thoſe privileges are purchaſed at the expence of virtue; it is the conſequence of a perſecution for conſcience ſake; for thoſe who have ſuffered the ſevereſt trial that human nature is capable of ſuſtaining, ſhall be honoured with the higheſt rewards in the bliſsful manſions of eternity. *Bleſſed are they which are perſecuted for righteouſneſs ſake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

Solid contentment is not to be expected from the applauſe of the world; but will be the portion of thoſe who are falſely reviled for their righteouſneſs, and ſhare in the affronts offered to God himſelf; for by theſe perſecutions the prophets of all ages have been diſtinguiſhed. *Bleſſed are ye when men ſhall revile you and perſecute you, and ſay all manner of evil againſt you falſely for my ſake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven; for ſo perſecuted they the prophets which were before you*, Matt. v. 11, 12.

Such are the declarations, with regard to happineſs, made by the Son of God; and ſurely we may believe the words of him who came down from heaven: who, in compaſſion to our infirmities, took upon him our nature; and to redeem us from the power of ſin and death, offered himſelf a ſacrifice on the croſs; by which he has ſatisfied the juſtice of Omnipotence, and opened to us the gates of eternal life.

After giving this account of true happineſs, the bleſſed Jeſus addreſſed himſelf to his diſciples, and explained their duty as the teachers appointed to lead others in the paths that lead to eternal felicity: excited them to diligence in diſpenſing the ſalutary influences of their doctrine and example: that their hearers might honour and praiſe the great creator of heaven and earth, who had been ſo kind to the children of men.

But as his doctrine of happineſs was very different from what the Jews were accuſtomed to hear from the Scribes and Phariſees, he thought proper

proper to declare, that he was not come to deſtroy the moral precepts contained in the law or the prophets, but to fulfil or confirm them. Nothing is ſo ſtedfaſt as the eternal truths of morality; the heavens may paſs away, and the whole frame of nature be diſſolved, but the rules of righteouſneſs ſhall remain immutable and immortal. And therefore, he ordered his diſciples, on the ſevereſt penalties, both to enforce by preaching and example, the ſtrict obſervation of all the moral precepts contained in the ſacred writings; and that in a much greater latitude than they were taken by the teachers of Iſrael. And, in conſideration of the frailties of human nature, taught them that excellent form of prayer, which has been uſed by Chriſtians of all denominations to this very day.

Our father which art in heaven.

If they are called fathers who beget children, and bring them up, the Almighty has the beſt title from every creature, and particularly from men: being the father of their ſpirits, the maker of their bodies, and the continual preſerver of both. Nor is this all: he is *our father* in ſtill a higher ſenſe, as he regenerates us, and reſtores his image upon our minds: ſo that, partaking of his nature, we become his children; and, therefore, we can, with a holy boldneſs, call him by the title of that relation. In the former ſenſe, God is the father of all his creatures, whether good or bad; but in the latter, he is the father only of the righteous. *Father* is the moſt magnificent title invented by philoſophers or poets, in honour of their gods; it conveys the moſt lovely idea poſſible to be conceived by the human breaſt. As it is uſed by mankind in general, it marks the eſſential character of the true God, namely, that he is the firſt cauſe of all things, or the author of their being; and at the ſame time, conveys a ſtrong idea of the tender love he bears to his creatures, whom he nouriſhes with an affection, and protects with a watchfulneſs, infinitely ſuperior to that of any earthly parent. The name of *father* alſo teaches us, that we owe our being to God, points out his goodneſs and mercy in upholding us, and expreſſes his power in giving us the things we ask; none of which are more difficult than creation. Nor is this all: we are likewiſe taught to give the great God the title of *father*, that our ſenſe of the tender relation in which he ſtands to us may be confirmed, our faith in his power and goodneſs ſtrengthened, our hopes of obtaining what we aſk in prayer cheriſhed, and our deſire of obeying and imitating him quickened; for the light of nature teaches us, that it is diſgraceful in children to degenerate from their parents, and that they cannot commit a greater crime than to diſobey the commands of an indulgent father. Laſtly, we are commanded to call him *father* in the plural number; and that even in our ſecret addreſſes to the throne of grace, to put us in mind that we are all brethren, the children of one common parent; and that we ought

to love one another with ſincerity, as we pray not for ourſelves only, but for all the human race.

Which art in heaven. We do not by theſe words confine the preſence of the Almighty to heaven; he is preſent every where; is about our paths and about our bed, and narrowly inſpecteth every action of the ſons of men. But they expreſs his majeſty and power, and diſtinguiſh him from thoſe we call fathers upon earth, and from falſe gods which are not in heaven, the happy manſions of bliſs and felicity, where the Almighty, who is eſſentially preſent in every part of the univerſe, gives more eſpecial manifeſtations of his preſence, to ſuch of his creatures as he hath exalted to ſhare with him in the eternal felicities of the heavenly Jeruſalem.

Hallowed be thy name. By the name of God, the Hebrews underſtood God himſelf, his attributes and his works; and, therefore, the meaning of the petition is, May thy exiſtence be univerſally believed, thy preſence loved and imitated, thy works admired, thy ſupremacy over all things acknowledged, thy providence reverenced and confided in. May all the ſons of men think ſo highly of his divine majeſty, of his attributes, of his works; and may we ſo expreſs our veneration of God, that his glory may be manifeſted in every corner of the world!

Thy kingdom come. Let the kingdom of the Meſſiah, or the goſpel-diſpenſation, be extended to the utmoſt parts of the earth, that all the children of men *may become one fold under one ſhepherd Jeſus Chriſt the righteous.*

Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven. May thy will, O thou great father of the univerſe, be done upon us, that by the light of thy glorious goſpel, we may be enabled to imitate the angels of light, by giving as ſincere, univerſal, and conſtant obedience to thy divine commands, as the imperfection of human nature will permit.

Give us this day our daily bread. Give us from time to time ſuch wholeſome and proper food, that we may be enabled to worſhip thee with cheerfulneſs and vigour.

And forgive our debts as we forgive our debtors. The earth and the fulneſs thereof being the Lord's, he has a right to govern the world, and to ſupport his government by puniſhing thoſe who tranſgreſs his laws. The ſuffering of puniſhment, therefore, is a debt which ſinners owe to the divine juſtice: ſo that when we aſk God in prayer to forgive our debts, we beg that he would be mercifully pleaſed to remit the puniſhment of all our ſins, particularly the pains of hell; and that, laying aſide his diſpleaſure, he would previouſly receive us into favour, and bleſs us with life eternal. In this petition, therefore, we confeſs our ſins, and expreſs the ſenſe we have of their guilt; namely, that they deſerve death; and ſurely nothing can be more proper than ſuch a confeſſion, in our addreſſes to God; becauſe humility, and a ſenſe of our own unworthineſs, when we aſk favours of the Almighty, whether ſpi-

ritual or temporal, have a tendency to augment the goodneſs of God in beſtowing them upon us.

The petition on which we aſk the forgiveneſs of our ſins, is very remarkable; *Forgive us only as we forgive.* We muſt forgive others, if we hope ourſelves to be forgiven; and are permitted to crave from God ſuch forgiveneſs only as we grant to others; ſo that, if we do not forgive even our enemies, we ſeriouſly and ſolemnly implore the Almighty, to condemn us to the puniſhments of eternal death. How remarkably careful therefore, ſhould men be to purge their hearts from all rancour and malice, before they venture into the temple of the Almighty to offer up their prayers to the throne of grace.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. That is, do not lead us into ſuch temptations as are too hard for human nature; but deliver us, by ſome means, from the evil; either by removing the temptation, or increaſing our ſtrength to reſiſt it. This petition teaches us to preſerve a ſenſe of our own inability to repel and overcome the ſolicitations of the world, and of the neceſſity there is of our receiving aſſiſtance from above; both to regulate our paſſions, and to conquer the difficulties of a religious life.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Becauſe the government of the univerſe is thine for ever, and thou alone poſſeſſeſt the power of creating and up-holding all things; and becauſe the glory of thine infinite perfections remains eternally with thee; therefore, all men ought to hallow thy name, ſubmit themſelves to thy government, and perform thy will. And in a humble ſenſe of their dependance, ſeek from thee the ſupply of their wants, the pardon of their ſins, and the kind protection of thy providence.

Such is the prayer delivered by the Son of God himſelf; and therefore we ſhould do well to underſtand it thoroughly, that when we enter the temple of the Lord, and addreſs him in ſolemn prayer, we may have hopes that he will grant our petitions. And above all, not to harbour in our breaſt the leaſt envy or malice againſt any who may have offended us; for it is only on a ſuppoſition, that we have forgiven others, that we have the leaſt reaſon to hope for obtaining forgiveneſs from the great creator.

Our bleſſed Saviour next inſtructed them in the great duty of faſting, in which he directed them not to follow the hypocrites in diſfiguring the faces, and in clothing themſelves in the melancholy weeds of ſorrow; but to be chiefly ſolicitous to appear before God, as one that truly faſteth. Then will the Almighty, who conſtantly ſurrounds us, and is acquainted with even the moſt ſecret thoughts of our hearts, openly beſtow upon us the rewards of a true penitent; whoſe mortification, contrition, and humility, he can diſcern, without the external appearances of ſorrow and repentance. It muſt, however, be remembered, that our bleſſed Saviour is here ſpeaking of private faſting,

ing, and to this alone his directions are to be applied; for when we are called upon to mourn over the public ſins or calamities, it ought to be performed in the moſt public manner.

Heavenly-mindedneſs was the next virtue inculcated by the bleſſed Jeſus. and this he recommended with a peculiar earneſtneſs; becauſe the Jewiſh doctors were, in general, ſtrangers to this virtue, in which he was deſirous his followers ſhould be cloathed, as being the moſt excellent ornament for a teacher of righteouſneſs.

This virtue is ſtrenuouſly recommended by our bleſſed Saviour, by ſhewing the deformity of its oppoſite, covetouſneſs, which has only periſhable things for its object. *Lay not up for yourſelves treaſures upon earth, where moth and ruſt doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and ſteal. But lay up for yourſelves treaſures in heaven, where neither moth nor ruſt doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor ſteal. For where your treaſure is, there will your heart be alſo*, Matt. vi. 19, 20, 21.

It is ſurely much more eligible to depoſit your treaſures in the chambers of the courts of heaven, than in this earthly habitation of clay, where they are ſubject to a thouſand diſaſters; and even at beſt can remain only for a ſhort ſeries of years; whereas, thoſe that are laid up in the heavenly Jeruſalem, are permanent, ſubject to no accident, and will purchaſe *a crown of glory that fadeth not away eternal in the heavens.* Nor let any man be ſo fooliſh as to think he can place his heart on the happineſs of a future life, when his treaſures are depoſited in this vale of miſery; for wherever are laid up the goods which his ſoul deſireth, there his heart and affections will alſo remain. If therefore ye are deſirous of ſharing in the joys of eternity, you muſt lay up your treaſures in the *manſions of my father's kingdom.*

And that they might not flatter themſelves that it was poſſible to be both heavenly-minded and covetous at the ſame time, he aſſured them that this was full as abſurd as to imagine a perſon could at the ſame time ſerve, and divide his affections equally between two maſters of oppoſite characters. *No man can ſerve two maſters; for either he will hate the one and love the other; or elſe he will hold to the one and deſpiſe the other: ye cannot ſerve God and Mammon*, Matt. vi. 24.

And as a farther confirmation of what he had advanced, he added a few plain and evident inſtances of the power, perfection, and extent of God's providence, in which his tender care for the leaſt and weakeſt of his creatures, ſhines with a remarkable luſtre, demonſtrating the wiſe and parental attention of the Deity to all the creatures of his hand. He deſired them to obſerve the birds of the air, the lillies, and even the graſs of the field; leading his moſt illiterate hearers to form a more elevated and extenſive idea of the divine government than the philoſophers had attained, who, though they allowed in general, that the world was governed by God, had very confuſed notions

notions of his providence with regard to every individual creature and action. He taught them that the Almighty Father of the whole, is the guardian and protector of every being in the univerſe; that every action is ſubject to his will, and nothing left to the blind determination of chance.

And if every action is governed by the divine will, we have ſurely no reaſon to be anxious about the neceſſaries of life. *Conſider*, ſays the bleſſed Jeſus, *the fowls of the air, they ſow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly father feedeth them: Are ye not much better than they?* Matt. vi. 26. Are not the fowls of the air, who have no concern for future wants, fed and nouriſhed by the beneficent hand of your heavenly father; and can ye doubt that man, whom he hath made the lord of the whole earth, ſhall be deſtitute of his tender care? *And why take ye thought for raiment? conſider the lillies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they ſpin. And yet I ſay unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of theſe,* Matt. vi. 28, 29. Conſider the lillies that ſo finely adorn the adjacent fields; how beautiful their form; how lively their colours; how fragrant their ſmell! the productions of art but faintly imitate them. Even Solomon himſelf, dreſſed in his ſplendid robes of royalty, was but meanly adorned in compariſon of theſe. And ſurely if Omnipotence thus beautifully cloaths the inanimate productions of the fields, whoſe duration is remarkably tranſient and uncertain; you have not the leaſt reaſon to doubt, but he will bleſs your honeſt endeavours, and ſend you proper clothing: are ye not of infinitely more value than they?

Let it therefore be your chief care to obtain the happineſs of the life to come; and all the good things of this life ſhall, in the courſe of the divine providence, be added unto you.

The next precept of the bleſſed Jeſus forbad all raſh and uncharitable judgments, either with regard to the characters of others in general, or of their actions in particular: leſt in ſo doing both God and man reſent the injury. If you judge charitably, ſays the meek and benevolent redeemer of the human race, making proper allowances for the frailties of human nature, and are ready to pity and pardon their faults, both your heavenly father, and man, will deal with you after the ſame manner. But if you always put the harſheſt conſtruction on every action, and are not touched with a feeling of your brother's infirmities, nor ſhew any mercy in the opinions you form of his character and actions, no mercy will be ſhewn you either from Omnipotence or the ſons of men. God will inflict on you the puniſhments you deſerve, and the world will be ſure to retaliate the injury. *Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment you judge ye ſhall be judged: and with what meaſure you meet, it ſhall be meaſured unto you again,* Matt. vii. 1, 2.

Laſtly, the bleſſed Jeſus preſſed on them the reformation of themſelves, a particular abſolutely neceſſary in thoſe whoſe office it is to reprove and reform their brethren. And ſurely nothing can be more prepoſterous, than to condemn in others, what we practiſe ourſelves; or to ſet up for reformers of the world, when we are ourſelves contaminated with the moſt enormous vices. With what countenance can we undertake to rebuke others for ſmall faults, when we are ourſelves plunged in the moſt deteſtable pollutions? Well might the redeemer of the world ſay, *Thou hypocrite, firſt caſt out the beam out of thine own eye; and then ſhalt thou ſee clearly to caſt out the mote out of thy brother's eye*, Matt. vii. 4.

Such are the ſeveral branches of righteouſneſs recommended by the Son of God, as neceſſary to the teachers of the goſpel of peace; but it is not enough that they know and practiſe the ſeveral branches of their duty: to extend the happy doctrines among mankind, there muſt alſo be a readineſs and even a deſire in the people to receive them; for if theſe be wanting, all attempts to ſpread theſe heavenly truths will prove abortive; and therefore our bleſſed Saviour added, *Give not that which is holy unto dogs, nor caſt your pearls before ſwine, leſt they trample them under your feet, and turn again and rent you*, Matt. vii. 6. Do not reprove men of a ſnarling diſpoſition, as the attempt, inſtead of having the happy effects intended, will but provoke them to purſue their wickedneſs with greater boldneſs than ever. You may warn others againſt their company and example; you may weep over them, and you may pray to your heavenly father for them; but you cannot reprove them with ſafety, or any hopes of ſucceſs.

And leſt the diſciples ſhould have thought that theſe precepts were not to be attained by human nature, he directed them to apply to God for the aſſiſtances of his ſpirit, together with all the other bleſſings neceſſary to their ſalvation; aſſuring them, that if they aſked with earneſtneſs and perſeverance, the father of mercies would not fail to anſwer their requeſts, and give them whatever they deſired. Adding the nobleſt precept of morality that was ever delivered by any teacher, *All things whatſoever ye would that men ſhould do unto you, do ye even ſo to them; for this is the law and the prophets*, Matt. vii. 12. How clear a rule of duty is this, and how eaſy and applicable to practice! Look into your own breaſt, and do as you would be done by, in the ſame condition.

Having laid down theſe heavenly precepts, he exhorted them to place a humble dependence on the ſpirit, to ſtrive to practiſe the precepts of religion, however difficult the taſk may appear. *Enter ye in at the ſtrait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to deſtruction, and many there be that go in thereat. Becauſe ſtrait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.* Matt. vii. 13, 14. How ſtrait indeed is the gate, how narrow the way that leadeth

leadeth to life! In the way nothing is to be found that flatters the fleſh, but many things that has a tendency to mortify it, poverty, faſting, watching, injuries, chaſtity, ſobriety. And with regard to the gate, it receives none that are puffed up with the glory of this life; none that are elated and blown up with pride; none that are diſtended with luxury: it does not admit thoſe that are laden with the caſkets of riches, or encumbered with the goods of this world. None can paſs through it but thoſe who are ſtripped of all worldly luſts, and who having put off their bodies, are, if I may be allowed the expreſſion, emaciated into ſpirits. There is however no reaſon for us to deſpair of entering through this heavenly portal; if we ſincerely endeavour, the aſſiſtances of the Holy Spirit will make us *more than conquerors*; and we ſhall ſafely paſs through the *ſtrait gate*, and purſue our journey with eaſe along the *narrow path*, till we arrive at the bleſsful manſions of the heavenly Canaan.

But as artful and deſigning men, veiled in the robes of piety and religion, would too often endeavour to draw them from the paths of righteouſneſs; our bleſſed Saviour cautioned his diſciples to beware of ſuch perſons, and carefully make the ſtricteſt ſcrutiny into their lives and doctrines.

The bleſſed Jeſus, after delivering the doctrines, concluded his diſcourſe, with the parable of the houſes built on different foundations; intimating, that the bare knowledge, or the ſimple hearing of the divineſt leſſons of morality ever delivered; nay, even the belief of theſe inſtructions, without the practice of them, is of no manner of importance. It is the exerciſe of the precepts of religion alone, that can ſo firmly eſtabliſh us, that we cannot be ſhaken by all the tempeſts of afflictions, temptations, and perſecutions of the preſent age. It is this foundation alone, which, like a flinty rock, or the eternal baſis of the mountains, can ſupport us in the day of trial. It is this only, that can enable us to defy the attempts of men and devils, and ſmile at the boiſterous waves of affliction.

CHAP. VII.

Chriſt cleanſeth a leper. Heals a centurion's ſon at Capernaum. Cures a demoniac. Heals Peter's mother-in-law. And travels through Galilee.

THE great Redeemer of mankind having ended his divine ſermon, came down from the mountain, ſurrounded by a multitude of people, who had liſtened with aſtoniſhment to his diſcourſe. Nor was it long before an incident gave them freſh occaſion for wonder. A leper met him in his way to Capernaum, and being doubtleſs acquainted with the wonderous works he had already performed, threw himſelf, with great humility, before the Son of God, uſing this remarkable expreſſion, *Lord, if thou wilt thou canſt make me clean.*

That

The ſpecies of leproſy common among the Jews and other eaſtern nations, was equally nauſeous and infectious: but this was ſo far from preventing the bleſſed Jeſus from approaching ſo loathſome an object, that it increaſed his pity; he even touched him; but, inſtead of being polluted himſelf, the leper was inſtantly cleanſed, and he departed glorifying God.

The Evangeliſt adds, that Jeſus forbade him to tell any perſon what had been done, but repair immediately to the prieſt, and offer the gift commanded by Moſes.

The leper being diſmiſſed, our bleſſed Saviour proceeded to Capernaum; but as he entered the city he was met by a Roman centurion, who repreſented to him, in the moſt pathetic manner, the deplorable condition of his ſon, who was grievouſly afflicted with a palſy. The compaſſionate Redeemer of the world liſtened attentively to his complaint, and immediately told him he would come and heal him. The centurion thought this too great a condeſcenſion to one who was not of the ſeed of Jacob; and therefore told him that he did not mean he ſhould give himſelf the trouble of going to his houſe, as this was an honour he had not the leaſt reaſon to expect, and he was aſſured that his word alone would be ſufficient; diſeaſes and devils being as much ſubject to his command, as his ſoldiers were to him.

Theſe words ſurpriſed our bleſſed Saviour. Not that he was ignorant of the centurion's faith, or the baſis on which it was built; he well knew the thoughts of his heart long before he uttered his requeſt; but he was filled with admiration at the exalted idea the Roman officer had conceived of his power; and to make this faith the more conſpicuous, he gave it the praiſe it ſo juſtly deſerved. *Verily I ſay unto you, I have not found ſo great faith, no not in Iſrael,* Matt. viii. 10.

This centurion's faith was doubtleſs built upon the miracle Jeſus had before wrought upon the nobleman's ſon; but the excellency and peculiarity of it conſiſted in applying the moſt grand ideas of the divine power to Jeſus, who, according to outward appearance, was only one of the ſons of men.

This exalted faith induced the bleſſed Jeſus to declare the gracious intentions of his Almighty Father, with regard to the Gentiles, namely, that he would as readily accept their faith as that of the Jews, and place them with Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven, while thoſe who boaſted of being the offſpring of theſe great patriarchs, but fell far ſhort of the heathens in faith, ſhould be excluded from the bliſsful ſeats of Paradiſe. *And I ſay unto you, that many ſhall come from te eaſt and weſt, and ſhall ſit down with Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom ſhall be caſt out into outer darkneſs; there ſhall be weeping and gnaſhing of teeth,* Matt. viii. 11, 12.

Having ſpoken thoſe words to the multitude, the bleſſed Jeſus turned himſelf to the centurion, and ſaid,

Go

Go thy way, and as thou haſt believed, ſo be it done to thee. Though the idea thou haſt conceived of my power is juſt, though remarkably great; as a reward for thy faith, I grant the petition thou haſt asked of me. *And*, the Evangeliſt adds, *his ſervant was healed in the ſelf-ſame hour*, Matt. viii. 13.

On the ſucceeding ſabbath, our Saviour went into the Jewiſh ſynagogue at Capernaum, and taught the people, delivering his inſtructions in ſo graceful and elegant a manner, that they were all aſtoniſhed; and to increaſe their admiration, one of the congregation, poſſeſſed with an unclean ſpirit, cried out in a terrible manner: *Let us alone, what have we to do with thee, thou Jeſus of Nazareth? Art thou come to deſtroy us? I know thee who thou art, the holy one of God*, Mark i. 22.

But the bleſſed Jeſus, who wanted the teſtimony of no ſuch confeſſors, commanded him to keep ſilence, and immediately come out of the man; which command the evil ſpirit inſtantly obeyed, to the great ſurprize and aſtoniſhment of all the ſpectators.

It has been the conſtant practice of thoſe who endeavour to depreciate our Saviour's miracles, to pretend, that no more is meant by a perſon poſſeſſed of the devil, than that he was afflicted with ſome loathſome diſeaſe; and that becauſe ſepulchres were conſidered as polluted places; and therefore, whenever any melancholy perſon frequented them, they were ſaid to be poſſeſſed with unclean ſpirits. They add, that it will be difficult to aſſign a reaſon why dæmons were at this time more numerous in Judea than in any other country.

Theſe objections, however, are eaſily anſwered. With regard to the firſt, namely, that theſe dæmoniacs were in reality nothing more than perſons afflicted with ſome loathſome diſeaſe, it is evidently falſe; the Evangeliſt having taken care to be very particular on this head. *They brought unto Chriſt all ſick people, that were taken with divers diſeaſes, and thoſe that were poſſeſſed with devils, and thoſe that were lunatick, and thoſe that had the palſy; and he healed them*, Matt. iv. 24. *He gave to the apoſtles power againſt evil ſpirits to caſt them out, and to heal all manner of ſickneſſes and diſeaſes*, Matt. x. 1. And accordingly *they healed many that were ſick of divers diſeaſes, and caſt out many devils*, Mark i. 34. It is therefore evident that thoſe ſaid to be poſſeſſed with unclean ſpirits, were different from thoſe that had diſeaſes. Let us therefore paſs to the ſecond objection, and ſee whether we cannot give a ſatisfactory reaſon, why dæmons were at this time more numerous in Judea than in any other country.

That there were evil ſpirits of this kind, is abundantly evident from the holy ſcriptures, the ſacred penmen having taken care to acquaint us with their origin and fall, their names and numbers, their government, and orders, their malicious deſigns, and employments, with ſeveral other particulars. So that no one can doubt of the exiſtence of dæmons, who believes theſe holy oracles to be the word of God. And it is equally evident, both from ſacred and pro-

phane hiſtory, that before our Saviour's advent great numbers of men were poſſeſſed with thoſe evil ſpirits.

The truth is, theſe angels of darkneſs had, at this time, taken poſſeſſion of ſo large a ſhare of the world, that they began to rival the Almighty in his worſhip; and, therefore, one end of the incarnation of the Son of God, was, *that he might deſtroy the works of the devil.* And hence we may eaſily ſee the reaſon why Omnipotence ſuffered theſe apoſtate ſpirits to appear ſo frequently in Judea at the time of our Saviour's miniſtry, namely, that the Son of God might, in a more ſignal manner, triumph over all the powers of darkneſs, and convince mankind that he was truly the Saviour of the world.

But to return. The fame of this miracle was ſoon ſpread over the neighbouring country. He had before healed the ſick, and done many other wonderful things: but to command with authority the unclean ſpirits to quit their reſidence; and to ſee theſe enemies to mankind readily obey his voice, filled them with aſtoniſhment; and abundantly convinced them, that he was filled with the ſpirit of God.

It has been aſked, why the devil, who, it is plain from the text, knew our Saviour to be the Son of God, ſhould put it into the heart of Judas to betray him, ſince this was the proper method of accompliſhing the redemption of mankind? But the anſwer to this is obvious and eaſy. The devil, doubtleſs, knew Jeſus to be the Meſſiah; but he was ignorant of the myſtery of man's redemption. And, therefore, though he was not ignorant of his divinity, yet he might be ſo far infatuated, as to think, that by deſtroying his humanity, he ſhould defeat the great deſign of Omnipotence. For however extenſive we may ſuppoſe his intellectual faculties to be, yet the wonderful work of man's redemption by the death of Chriſt, was a myſtery that no finite underſtanding could comprehend, till God himſelf was pleaſed to reveal it.

Jeſus having performed this aſtoniſhing miracle in the Synagogue, he retired to Peter's houſe, where he found his wife's mother ſick of a fever; but on his taking her by the hand, ſhe was immediately reſtored to her former health, and aroſe from the bed, and *miniſtered unto him.*

The Evangeliſt St. Luke, in his account of this miraculous cure, tells us, that *he rebuked the fever*, Luke iv. 39. to intimate his authority over all diſeaſes, being analogous to the figurative expreſſions in Scripture, which not only repreſent all inanimate creatures as ſervants to the Almighty, but diſeaſes, famine, peſtilence, and the like, as executioners waiting on him to inflict puniſhment on rebellious ſinners. *Before him went the peſtilence, and burning diſeaſes went forth at his feet*, Heb. iii. 5.

The fame of theſe miracles was ſoon ſpread through the city; and as ſoon as the Sabbath was over, which ended at the ſetting of the ſun, the whole city was gathered togeher about Peter's houſe, and with them great numbers of ſick perſons, and thoſe

thoſe poſſeſſed with devils. The ſight of ſo many human objects in diſtreſs, excited the pity of this heavenly phyſician; ſo that he immediately healed them all. And thus was the prophecy of Iſaiah fulfilled, *Himſelf took our infirmities, and bare our ſickneſſes.*

But the prodigious crowds that now gathered round him in Capernaum began to be troubleſome; and he retired into a deſert, whither the multitude ſoon followed him, and intreated him never to depart from them. But as this requeſt was inconſiſtent with the intention of his taking our nature upon him, he, for the firſt time, refuſed their requeſt, *and preached in the Synagogues of Galilee*, Luke iv. 44.

CHAP. VIII.

The firſt miraculous draught of fiſhes. A ſecond Leper cleanſed. The ſtorm rebuked. And the demoniacs of Gadara cured.

AFTER preaching in the ſynagogues of different cities of Galilee, the bleſſed Jeſus returned to Capernaum, followed by ſuch throngs of people, that he found it neceſſary to ſtep into Peter's ſhip; from whence he taught the multitude, who ſtood on the ſhore liſtening with great attention to his doctrine.

Having finiſhed his diſcourſe, he turned himſelf to Simon Peter, deſiring him to launch out farther from the ſhore, and let down his net. On which the diſciple told him of the unſucceſsful pains they had taken during the whole night; but added, that he would, in obedience to his command, make one trial more. Nor had he any cauſe to repent; for the net was no ſooner in the lake, than they found it ſo full of large fiſhes, that it was in danger of breaking.

This ſurpriſing turn of fortune aſtoniſhed Peter, who falling down at the feet of Jeſus, cried out, *Depart from me, for I am a ſinful man, O Lord.* He was conſcious of the many ſins he had been guilty of; and therefore afraid of being in the company of ſo divine a perſon, leſt ſome infirmity or offence might have expoſed him to more than ordinary chaſtiſements.

But the benevolent Saviour of mankind bid him baniſh his fears; and told him, that from henceforth the employments of him and his companions ſhould be far more noble: they ſhould *catch men*; that is, they ſhould turn them from the croked paths of iniquity, to the ſtrait road leading to the heavenly manſions.

This miracle was conſidered by the diſciples as a plainer manifeſtation of his being the ſon of God, than thoſe they had ſeen him perform on the ſick in the city and neighbourhood of Capernaum. It was a common opinion among the Jews, that all good men, by prayers and laying their hands on the ſick, were able to cure certain diſeaſes, and even to caſt out devils; but that the creatures inhabiting the elements of air or water, were ſubject only to the commands of Omnipotence himſelf;

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conſequently the power ſhewn by our bleſſed Saviour on this occaſion, undeniably proved him to be divine. And accordingly this demonſtration of his power, rendered theſe diſciples, for the future, abſolutely devoted to his will; and in the greatneſs of their admiration abandoned every thing, and followed the Saviour of the world.

The diſciples being thus become the inſeparable companions of their divine maſter, followed him through the cities of Galilee, where, according to his uſual cuſtom, he preached the Goſpel of the kingdom of God, and confirmed the doctrines he delivered with aſtoniſhing miracles.

In one of the cities which he viſited in this tour, he found *a man full of leproſy, who ſeeing Jeſus, fell on his face, and beſought him, ſaying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canſt make me clean.* Luke v. 12. It was the cuſtom in Judea, for the prieſts to baniſh from ſociety thoſe perſons who were afflicted with the contagious ſpecies of leproſy. The diſeaſe of this perſon therefore was of a leſs peſtilent kind, as he was ſuffered to be permitted to enjoy the converſation of men. His caſe however excited the pity of the compaſſionate Jeſus, who immediately cleanſed him, and ordered him to repair to Jeruſalem; and, after ſhewing himſelf to the prieſt, offer the gifts commanded by Moſes; giving him the ſame admonition he had done before, namely, not to tell any man what had been done for him. But the bleſſing he had received was ſo great and unexpected, that, inſtead of concealing, he publiſhed every where the great things Jeſus had done for him; which brought ſuch crowds to the Son of God, that he was obliged to retire from Capernaum into the Wilderneſs, to refreſh his body with reſt, and his ſpirit with prayer and meditation.

Moſt writers have ſuppoſed that this leper, and the other mentioned in the foregoing Chapter, are one and the ſame perſon; but this is a miſtake. The former was cured in the fields, the latter in the city. After cleanſing the firſt, Jeſus went to Capernaum, and healed the centurion's ſon; but after curing the latter, he retired into the Wilderneſs, to ſhun the prodigious crouds, which ſoon gathered round him, from the leper's publiſhing every where the miracle Jeſus had wrought for him.

If it ſhould be aſked, why our bleſſed Saviour ſo often commanded the people to conceal his miracles? the following anſwer may be given: His modeſty and humility would not ſuffer that his works ſhould have the leaſt appearance of oſtentation; nor the Jews to have the leaſt pretence for accuſing him of *ſeeking his own glory.* Nor was it proper at this time to irritate too greatly the ſcribes and phariſees. He well knew, that in a certain determinate ſpace of time, they would bring about what had been determined concerning him in the council of Omnipotence. In the mean time, *he was to work the works of him that ſent him while it was day,* John ix. 4. And to propagate his goſpel as much as poſſible,

poſſible both among the Jews and Gentiles; which could not have been ſo conveniently performed, if the greatneſs of his miracles had once provoked the malice and envy of his enemies, to exert their utmoſt power againſt him. He likewiſe knew the mad, capricious humour of the multitude, and had reaſon to apprehend *that they might come and take him away by force, and make him king*, John vi. 15. if all his miracles had been blazed abroad, before he had ſufficiently inſtructed them in the ſpiritual nature of his kingdom, and that his throne was not to be eſtabliſhed in the earthly, but in the heavenly Jeruſalem.

Thus we ſee that the bleſſed Jeſus did not, without ſufficient reaſon, deſire his miracles to be concealed. The fame of this ſingle miracle being ſpread through the neighbouring countries, brought ſuch multitudes of people to Capernaum, that, as I have already obſerved, he was obliged to retire into a ſolitary part of the neighbouring Wilderneſs. Nor could he long enjoy the repoſe and tranquillity he ſought, even in this thirſty waſte; the people ſoon diſcovered the place of his retreat, and flocked to him from every quarter.

Our Saviour finding all his endeavours to conceal himſelf in the Deſert would be in vain, ordered his diſciples to accompany him to the other ſide of the lake: upon which a certain Scribe, who happened to be preſent, declared he would follow him: but Jeſus, who well knew that his deſire was only to gain the profits and advantages of an earthly kingdom, which he ſuppoſed the Meſſiah would eſtabliſh, told him, that if he intended nothing more by following him, than to improve his worldly fortune, he would find himſelf wretchedly miſtaken. *The foxes have holes*, ſaid the bleſſed Jeſus to this teacher of Iſrael, *and the birds of the air have neſts; but the ſon of man hath not where to lay his head*, Matt. viii. 20.

The title *ſon of man*, is a name by which the Meſſiah is called in the prophecy concerning him, recorded by the prophet Daniel (vii. 13.) where his univerſal dominion is deſcribed; and therefore, when applied to our great Redeemer, denotes his human nature, and, at the ſame time, conveys an idea of that glorious kingdom, over which he was in his human nature to preſide. But as it was alſo the name by which the old prophets were called, from the contempt in which they were held by their countrymen, it is uſed on ſeveral occaſions to expreſs the deep humiliation of the Son of God.

The diſciples having prepared the ſhip, took on board their maſter, and departed for the other ſide of the lake, attended by many boats full of people, who were deſirous of hearing his heavenly diſcourſes, and being ſpectators of his aſtoniſhing works. But Jeſus being fatigued with the labours of the day, ſat himſelf down at the ſtern of the ſhip, and fell aſleep.

In the mean time the weather, which had till now been calm and ſerene, ſuddenly changed. A terrible

ſtorm came on, and the raging waves daſhed impetuouſly againſt the ſhip, threatening every moment to bury them all in the bowels of the deep. The darkneſs of the night increaſed the horrors of the tempeſt. Now they were carried on the top of the mountainous wave, and ſeem to touch the ſkies; then plunged to the bottom of the deep, while the foaming billows roared horribly above them. In vain the diſciples exerted their utmoſt ſtrength; the ſtorm continued to increaſe, and baffled all the efforts of human ſtrength. The waves broke over the ſhip, the waters ruſhed in, and ſhe began to ſink. All hopes of eſcaping were vaniſhed; deſpair ſeized every individual, and they were on the brink of periſhing, when they ran to Jeſus, crying out, *Maſter, Maſter, we periſh!* Their paſſionate cries rouzed him from his ſleep. He raiſed his hand, ſo often employed in acts of mercy and benevolence; and, with a ſtern and aweful voice, rebuked the boiſterous elements. They knew his voice, and in an inſtant forgot their rage. The aerial torrent ſtopped ſhort in its impetuous courſe, and became ſilent as the grave, while the mountainous waves ſunk at once into their beds, and the ſurface of the deep became as ſmooth as poliſhed marble.

The diſciples had before ſeen their great maſter perform many miracles; and therefore had abundant reaſon to rely wholly on his power and goodneſs. They ſhould have conſidered that he who could by his word reſtore the ſick, and bring the inhabitants of the ſea to their nets, could with the ſame eaſe have ſupported them on the ſurface of the deep, had the ſhip ſunk beneath them, and carried them ſafe to the place whither they were going. But they ſeemed to have forgotten the power of their maſter; and, when human aſſiſtance failed, to have abandoned all hopes of life. The bleſſed Jeſus, therefore, very juſtly rebuked them, *Why are ye fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?* Why ſhould you doubt of my power to protect you? The voyage was undertaken at my command; and therefore you ſhould have been confident that I would not ſuffer you to periſh in it.

It is indeed ſtrange that the diſciples ſhould have been ſo remarkably terrified during the ſtorm, and after it to make this remarkable reflection, *What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the ſea obey him!* Matt. viii. 27. But it ſhould be remembered that the terror of the ſtorm had deprived them of all preſence of mind; ſo that they did not recollect the divine power of their maſter during the fury of the tempeſt: and the tranſition from a terrible ſtorm to the moſt perfect calm, was ſo quick and aſtoniſhing, that they uttered this reflection before the confuſion in their minds was over.

Soon after the ſtorm was allayed, they arrived in the country of Gadara; and on their landing, two men poſſeſſed with devils came from the tombs to meet Jeſus. One of them, who was more furious than the other, had been often bound with chains and fetters, but to no purpoſe, being always broken with great fury;

fury; ſo that no man attempted farther to reſtrain him. Being therefore at liberty, he ſhunned the ſociety of men, wandering day and night in deſert places, among the ſepulchres or caverns where the dead were depoſited, crying and making the moſt diſmal complaints, and cutting himſelf with ſtones.

The diſciples were terrified at the approach of theſe furious mortals; but Jeſus ſoon diſſipated their fears, commanding, while the men were at a diſtance, the devils to come out of them. The heavenly mandate was no ſooner given, than they fell on their faces, crying out, *What have I to do with thee Jeſus, thou ſon of the moſt high God?* Mark v. 7. *Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?* Matt. viii. 29. *I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not,* Mark v. 7. The apoſtate ſpirits well knew the power of the Son of God, and trembled leſt he ſhould immediately caſt them into the torments prepared for them, and not ſuffer them to continue roving through the earth till the day of judgment, when they ſhould be condemned to eternal puniſhments in the ſight of the whole creation.

Jeſus being willing that the torments ſuffered by theſe miſerable men, ſhould be known before he healed them, aſked one of the devils his name, who anſwered, *Legion, for we are many,* Mark v. 9. Begging, at the ſame time, that he would not command them to repair into the deep, or bottomleſs pit, but ſuffer them to enter a herd of ſwine, feeding at a diſtance.

How crafty is the great deceiver of mankind! The power of the Son of God, he knew, was not to be reſiſted; but he could not help envying the benevolent miracles he had wrought for the ſons of men; and was therefore willing to prevent as much as poſſible their good effects on the miſerable people of this country. This was the true reaſon why he begged leave to enter the herd of ſwine: he knew that if he could obtain that permiſſion, he could deſtroy them; and this he hoped would render our bleſſed Saviour odious to the wicked inhabitants of Gadara.

Though his ſecret intentions could not be hid from the Saviour of the world, yet he permitted the devils to enter the ſwine, that his diſciples and others who were with him, might be fully convinced that theſe unhappy perſons were really poſſeſſed by apoſtate ſpirits; and at the ſame time give them a terrible inſtance of their power, when free from all reſtraint.

Accordingly, the permiſſion was no ſooner granted, than the ſpectators beheld at a diſtance the torments theſe poor creatures ſuffered, with what amazing rapidity they ran to the confines of the lake, leaped from the precipices into the ſea, *and periſhed in the waters.* While the perſons who, a moment before, were raving and cutting themſelves in the moſt ſhocking manner, became at once meek and compoſed, having recovered entirely the exerciſe of their reaſon.

The keepers of the herd, terrified at this aſtoniſhing miracle, ran into the city, publiſhing in every part, the cure of the men poſſeſſed with devils, and the deſtruction of the ſwine. This ſurprizing report threw the inhabitants into the greateſt conſternation: they left the city to be ſpectators of ſo wonderful an event; but when they ſaw the men who had been poſſeſſed, ſitting at the feet of Jeſus, decently cloathed, and in their right minds, their fear was increaſed. For knowing they had treſpaſſed in keeping the ſwine, which was contrary to the law of Moſes, they dreaded a more ſevere puniſhment; and being ignorant of the goodneſs of Jeſus, though he had given them ſo remarkable a proof of it in the cure of theſe wretched mortals, beſought him that he would leave their country.

It was a cuſtom among the heathens, when any illuſtrious hero had delivered his country from wild beaſts, monſters, tyrants, or any other evil, to erect proud columns to his memory; his ſtatue was ſeen in every place; altars blazed to his glory; they honoured him with the high appellation of Saviour; and thought nothing, not even divine honours, too great to confer upon him. But when Chriſt had removed a monſter from the Gadarenes, more formidable and fearful than any in heathen hiſtory, even a *legion of devils*, and rendered the way, by which no man could paſs before, ſecure from danger, inſtead of being received by them as a Saviour and as a God, with the acclamations and hoſannahs of the people, he was beſought to depart out of their coaſts! Stupid people! They had indeed loſt their herd of ſwine; but ſurely the valuable gift they had received in two of their countrymen and fellow-creatures, being delivered from the tyranny of Satan, was better than the cattle on a thouſand hills, and merited at leaſt their thanks and acknowledgments!

This ſtupid requeſt of the Gadarenes, was, however, complied with by the bleſſed Jeſus, who entering the ſhip, returned to the country from whence he came, leaving to them a valuable pledge of his love; and to us a noble pattern of perſeverance in well-doing, even when our kindneſſes are condemned or requited with injuries. He would not ſuffer the perſons diſpoſſeſſed to accompany him, though they earneſtly requeſted it; but ordered them to ſtay in their own country, as a ſtanding monument both of his power and goodneſs. *Go home to thy friends*, ſaid the compaſſionate Jeſus, to one of them, *and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compaſſion on thee*, Mark v. 19.

I cannot conclude the account of this remarkable miracle, without obſerving, that we have here a fuller diſplay of the tyranny and power of the devil, than in any other part of ſcripture; and therefore, we may oppoſe it to the looſe ſcoffs, and recommend it to the ſerious attention of thoſe infidels, and thoughtleſs ſinners,

ners, who, like the Phariſees and Sadducees of old, when exhorted to abandon their evil courſes, from a conſideration of the power of Satan, and the dread of eternal torments, make a mock at both, eſteeming them nothing more than religious fables, calculated to keep an ignorant world in awe. But with regard to themſelves, their minds are too well furniſhed with wiſdom, and their geniuſſes too penetrating, to believe any thing of the flames of the bottomleſs pit, and the malice of the prince who ſways the ſceptre of that horrid place; eſteeming him a more mild and generous governor, than he is repreſented in this miracle. But could they be perſuaded to attend ſeriouſly to the miſerable ſpectacle drawn by the Evangeliſt of a wretched mortal, naked, dwelling in tombs, crying out day and night, cutting himſelf with ſtones, furious, fierce, deſtructive; ſurely their ſcoffs and idle mockeries would be changed into compaſſion, and a watchful care of themſelves. This ſurely common prudence would dictate. But if they will deride, and ſtill disbelieve; a ſhort ſpace of time, perhaps a ſingle moment, will convince them of their fatal error; and dreadful experience force them to acknowledge the greatneſs of the tyranny, the bitterneſs of malice of this prince of darkneſs againſt the ſouls of the ſons of men! May they ſee the error of their ways; and before it be too late, ſeek, by a ſincere repentance, *the things that belong to their peace!*

CHAP. IX.

Jeſus cures a paralytic at Capernaum. Calls Matthew to the apoſtleſhip. Heals the woman afflicted with an iſſue of blood. Raiſes Jairus's daughter from the dead. Reſtores two blind men to ſight. Caſts out a devil. Makes another tour through Galilee. Chooſes twelve of his diſciples, to attend conſtantly on him: and preaches to the people.

THE bleſſed Jeſus being, with his diſciples, landed in Galilee, repaired to Capernaum; but their arrival was no ſooner known, than ſuch throngs of people were gathered together, that the houſe could not contain them, nor even the court before the door. He, however, preached the words of eternal life to the liſtening audience, among whom were many Phariſees and doctors of the law, who, from the fame of his miracles, were come from all quarters to hear him.

But he did not only preach the moſt pathetic and awakening ſermons as might have been alone ſufficient to have turned their minds from the ways of vice into the paths of virtue; he alſo performed ſuch aſtoniſhing miracles, as ought to have removed all their ſcruples with regard to the truth of his miſſion.

Among other inſtances he gave of his divine power, was that of reſtoring a man to perfect health, who had long been afflicted with the palſy, and was reduced by that terrible diſeaſe to the moſt melancholy condition,

dition, being unable to move any member of his body, but ſeemed rather an emaciated carcaſe than a man. This miſerable object was ſupported in his bed by four perſons, who being unable to enter by the door, on account of the multitude, carried him to the top of the houſe, which, like the other roofs in that country, was flat, and had a battlement round, according to the direction given by Moſes, *Deut.* xxii. 8.

On theſe roofs there was a kind of trap-door, by which they came out of the houſes upon the roofs, where they ſpent a conſiderable part of the day. It was alſo common to have a flight of ſtairs from the garden to the roof; and by theſe the perſons ſeemed to have carried the ſick of the palſy; but finding the door faſtened, forced it open, or uncovered the roof, and through the opening let down by ropes, the ſick of the palſy, lying on his bed, into the midſt of the company before Jeſus; who ſeeing the faith of the friends of this afflicted perſon, he had compaſſion on him, and ſpake aloud, *Son, be of good cheer, thy ſins are forgiven thee.*

Theſe words offended the ſcribes, who ſaid within themſelves, this man ſpeaketh blaſphemy; for he appropriates that to himſelf which is ſolely the property of Omnipotence. *Who can forgive ſins but God only?* They were ignorant that the perſon who uttered ſuch gracious words, was the Son of God; and conſequently, had the power of forgiving the ſins of the human race.

But Jeſus, who knew what paſſed the moſt ſecret receſſes of the heart, and was willing to ſhew them that he was really endued with the ſpirit of God, ſaid to them, *Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is it eaſier to ſay to the ſick of the palſy, thy ſins be forgiven thee, or to ſay, ariſe, and take up thy bed and walk?* Theſe were queſtions that could only be reſolved of the latter, it being doubtleſs eaſier to forgive ſins than remit that which is inflicted as its puniſhment. But theſe incorrigible mortals held their peace; and the bleſſed Jeſus only added, that the miracles he was going to perform, would ſufficiently demonſtrate, that he had not uſurped what did not in the ſtricteſt manner belong to him. And turning himſelf from theſe bigotted teachers of Iſrael towards the ſick of the palſy, ſaid unto him, *Ariſe, take up thy bed and go into thine own houſe*, Matt. ix. 6.

Nor was this divine mandate any ſooner given, than the man was reſtored to his former health and ſtrength; and, to the aſtoniſhment of all preſent, roſe, took up his bed, and departed to his own houſe, glorifying God. And all the people, when they ſaw this great work, expreſſed the higheſt degree of ſurprize mixed with admiration, for the great honour the Almighty had conferred on human nature. *They glorified God who had given ſuch power unto men.*

But with regard to the Scribes and Phariſees, though they muſt have been confounded at the miracle, yet ſtill continued in their unbelief; an inſtance which ſhould awaken in us the moſt ſerious thoughts, as it abun-

dantly demonſtrates, that the palſy of the ſoul is a much more deplorable diſeaſe than the palſy of the body.

Soon after our bleſſed Saviour had performed this miracle, he repaired to the ſea-ſide, and taught a multitude of people. What the ſubject of his ſermon was, the Evangeliſts have not told us; but it was doubtleſs, like the reſt, calculated to promote the eternal welfare of mankind.

Having finiſhed his diſcourſe, he returned to the city; and in his way ſaw Matthew or Levi, the ſon of Alpheus, a rich publican, ſitting in his office, where the cuſtoms are levied at the port of Capernaum, whom he ordered to follow him. Matthew immediately obeyed the ſummons, and followed the Saviour of the world, to purſue a far more honourable and important employment, being afterwards both an Apoſtle and Evangeliſt.

A few days after his converſion, he made a ſplendid entertainment for his maſter, inviting all the publicans he knew; hoping that by hearing the heavenly converſation of Chriſt, they might alſo repent, and embrace the doctrines of the Goſpel.

But the Scribes and Phariſees, who conſidered all men as ſinners except themſelves, eſpecially the Publicans, were highly offended, that one who called himſelf a prophet ſo far demeaned himſelf as to be ſeen in the company of ſuch men; and aſked his diſciples, with an air of inſolence, in the hearing of all the gueſts, how their maſter could ſit down at the ſame table with publicans and ſinners?

In order to anſwer this inſidious queſtion, Jeſus told them, that the ſick only had need of a phyſician, and deſired them to reflect ſeriouſly on the prophet Hoſea's declaration: *I will have mercy and not ſacrifice.* The turning ſinners into the paths of righteouſneſs, which is the higheſt act of benevolence, is far more acceptable to the Almighty than all the ceremonies of the law of Moſes, ſo highly magnified by your fraternity; who, on many occaſions, obſerve them at the expence of charity; adding, *I am not come to call the righteous but ſinners to repentance.* The repentance of the righteous is not ſo much the object of my attention as the converſion of ſinners.

This anſwer, however ſatisfactory to an unprejudiced perſon, was far from being ſo to the Scribes and Phariſees, who, joining with ſome of John's diſciples then preſent, returned to Matthew's houſe, and demanded of him, why his diſciples wholly neglected to faſt, a duty often performed both by the rulers of Iſrael and the diſciples of John? To this the bleſſed Jeſus replied, It is not a proper ſeaſon for the friends of the bridegroom to faſt and afflict themſelves, while they enjoy his company: *but the days will come when the bridegroom ſhall be taken away from them, and then ſhall they faſt.* The various calamities and afflictions that ſhall attend them after the departure of their maſter, ſhall cauſe them to faſt, which they ſhall repeat as often as the circumſtances

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of diſtreſs and danger, with which they are ſurrounded, ſhall require it. And added, that to have obliged his diſciples to have obſerved the precepts of frequent abſtinence, at a time when he was employing them to preach the Goſpel, by which all the legal ceremonies of the law were to be aboliſhed, would have been as abſurd as to ſew a piece of new cloth upon a rotten garment, which would only make the rent worſe; or to put new wine into old leathern bottles, which, on the firſt fermentation of the liquor, would burſt. Indicating, that the old corrupt nature of man will not admit of a thorough reformation being made at once; that infant-virtue muſt not immediately be put to the greateſt trials, leſt it be deſtroyed by the ſeverity of the exerciſe.

While the bleſſed Jeſus was thus reaſoning with the Scribes and Phariſees in Matthew's houſe, Jairus, a ruler of the ſynagogue, came running to him, in all the agonies of grief; and, in the preſence of the whole company, fell on the ground before him, beſeeching that he would come and heal his daughter, who lay at the point of death.

And when did our compaſſionate maſter ever refuſe his gracious aſſiſtance to thoſe who implored it of him? He immediately aroſe and followed the ruler towards his houſe, ſurrounded by a great multitude of people, who were deſirous of ſeeing ſo great a miracle performed.

But as he paſſed through the ſtreets, a woman who had for twelve years been afflicted with an iſſue or flux of blood, and had ſpent her whole ſubſtance on phyſicians to no purpoſe, *came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment; for ſhe ſaid within herſelf, if I may but touch his clothes I ſhall be whole.* Nor was ſhe deceived; for no ſooner had ſhe touched the border of the garment of the Son of God, than *her iſſue of blood dried up*; and ſhe felt, by the return of her health and ſtrength, and other agreeable ſenſations that accompany ſuch ſudden changes from painful diſeaſes to perfect health, that the cure was abſolutely complete.

But this tranſaction could not be concealed: the bleſſed Jeſus knew the whole and her ſecret thoughts before ſhe put them in practice; and pleaſed with the opinion this woman had entertained both of his power and goodneſs, would not by any means ſuffer it to paſs unapplauded. Accordingly he turned himſelf about in the preſs, and aſked, *who touched me?* He well knew the perſon; but aſked this queſtion for the fuller manifeſtation of the woman's faith, and that he might have an opportunity of inſtructing and comforting her.

But his diſciples being ignorant of what had paſſed, were ſurpriſed at the queſtion: *Thou ſeeſt*, ſaid they to their maſter, *the multitude thronging and preſſing thee, and ſayeſt thou, who touched me?* They did not diſtinguiſh between the ſpiritual and corporeal touch, nor knew that ſuch efficacious virtue had gone out of their maſter. Jeſus, however, perſiſted in knowing who it was that had done the thing; and the woman finding



If I may but touch his Garment I shall be whole. Matthew IX.

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finding it in vain to conceal her action any longer, came to him trembling, and told him all. Perhaps, the uncleaneſs of her diſtemper was the reaſon of her fear, thinking he would be offended even at her touching the hem of his garment. But the divine phyſician, far from being angry, ſpake to her in the kindeſt manner, commended her faith, on which account he had conſented to heal her plague. *Daughter be of good comfort, thy faith hath made thee whole*, Matt. ix. 22.

This incidental miracle muſt doubtleſs have greatly ſtrengthened the ruler's faith; for behold a virtue little inferior to that of raiſing the dead, iſſues from the border of his garment, and heals a diſeaſe, which, for the ſpace of twelve years, had baffled all the precepts of the healing art, and defied the power of medicine. Indeed the faith of this ruler had great need of the ſtrongeſt confirmations; for, news was brought him that his daughter was even now dead; and therefore, it was needleſs for him to give any further trouble to Jeſus not in the leaſt ſuſpecting that he had power to recal the fleeting ſpirit, and re-animate a breathleſs carcaſs.

This meſſage was a terrible blow to the affectionate parent. His only daughter, who, a few days before, was in the bloom of youth, was now a pale and lifeleſs corps; and with her all his joys and comforts were fled. But Jeſus commiſerating his grief, deſired him to be comforted, promiſing that his daughter ſhould be made whole.

On his coming to the ruler's houſe he found it full of mourners, who made terrible lamentations; a ſufficient demonſtration that the damſel was really dead. And accordingly, when our bleſſed Saviour deſired the mourners to ceaſe their funeral ceremonies, as *the maid was not dead but ſleeping*, they *laughed him to ſcorn*.

It ſhould be remembered, that the Jews, when they ſpeak of a perſon's death, ſtile it *ſleep*, to intimate their belief, that his ſpirit exiſted in the happy ſcenes of paradiſe, and their hopes of a future reſurrection to life eternal. But the bleſſed Jeſus uſed the word with remarkable propriety, to ſignify, that tho' ſhe was now locked in the cold embraces of death, yet he was going to releaſe her from the power of the king of terrors, with the ſame eaſe as a perſon is awaked from ſleep. Thus our bleſſed Saviour, in the very manner of performing the miracle, modeſtly declined the honour that would undoubtedly reſult from a work ſo greatly ſuperior to all the powers of the ſons of men.

After ſaying theſe few words to the mourners, he entered the chamber where the damſel was lying, but ſuffered none to follow him, except Peter, James, and John; together with the father and mother of the damſel. Probably, his reaſon for ſuffering theſe only to be ſpectators of ſo ſtupendous a work, was, that they might have an opportunity of examining the whole tranſaction in the moſt careful manner, and be thence enabled afterwards to report it, upon

the fulleſt conviction, and with every circumſtance of credibility.

The bleſſed Jeſus now approached the body, took her by the hand, and with a gentle voice, ſaid, *Maid ariſe!* The heavenly command was inſtantly obeyed; the damſel aroſe, as from a ſleep, and with all the appearance of health and vigour; for Jeſus commanded to give her ſomething to eat: a plain proof that ſhe did not appear in the weak and languiſhing condition of a perſon worn out with diſeaſe, or even like one who had fainted away; a circumſtance that abundantly proves the greatneſs and perfection of the miracle. It is therefore no wonder, that her parents ſhould be aſtoniſhed at ſo ſtupendous a work, the fame of which was preſently ſpread through all the neighbouring country, though Jeſus, who was in every ſenſe above praiſe, and therefore never courted it, had ſtrictly charged them that they ſhould tell no man what was done.

Thus did the great Meſſiah diſplay his power, and convince the world, that thoſe who die in him are not dead; and that he hath the keys of life and death. Thoſe alſo of the preſent age who believe that the ſoul ſleeps with the body till the reſurrection, would do well to conſider the expreſſion of the Evangeliſt, *Her ſpirit came again*, Luke viii. 55. which ſufficiently ſhews that the ſoul exiſts ſeparately, when the body is laid in the chambers of the grave.

Having performed this benevolent miracle, our bleſſed Saviour left the ruler's houſe, and was followed through the ſtreets by two blind men, imploring his aſſiſtance; nor did they implore in vain. The Redeemer of mankind was and ſtill is always ready to grant the petitions of thoſe who apply to him for relief. Accordingly, he was no ſooner entered into the houſe, to avoid the throngings of the multitude, than he touched their eyes, and ſaid, *According to your faith, be it unto you*, Matt. ix. 29. And immediately the valuable gift of ſight was beſtowed upon them. The blind men were ſo overjoyed at beholding the light, that though he charged them to keep the miracle a ſecret, they publiſhed his fame in every part of the country, being unwilling to conceal what, in gratitude for ſo great a mercy, they thought themſelves obliged to divulge.

The men who had thus miraculouſly received their ſight, being departed, the multitude brought to him a *dumb man poſſeſſed with a devil*. So moving a ſight could not fail of attracting a compaſſionate regard from the Saviour of the world, who, being never weary of well doing, immediately caſt out the apoſtate ſpirit; on which the dumb man recovered the uſe of ſpeech, and ſpake in a very rational manner, to the aſtoniſhment of the multitude, who, with one voice declared that ſuch wondrous works were never wrought by any of the old prophets. *It was never ſo ſeen in Iſrael*, Matt. ix. 34.

But the Phariſees ſtill perſiſted in their old malice; and being unable to deny the miracle, inſinuated, that he did it by a power received from Belzebub, *the prince of the devils*. A

poor pretence indeed, and did not eſcape the animadverſion it deſerved from the Saviour of the world, as we ſhall ſee in a ſucceeding chapter. Well might the prophet Iſaiah cry out in a prophetic extaſy, *Who hath believed our report! and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed!*

But all theſe calumnies of the Phariſees could not provoke the meek and merciful Jeſus, to ceaſe from performing theſe compaſſionate offices for the children of men. On the contrary, he exerted himſelf ſtill more and more to promote the proſperity and ſalvation of the whole human race. And accordingly, he left Capernaum, and travelled thro' the country, in ſearch of miſerable objects on whom he might confer happineſs and peace; *viſiting all the cities and villages, teaching in their ſynagogues, and preaching the goſpel of the kingdom, and healing every ſickneſs, and every diſeaſe among the people*, Matt. ix. 35.

In his return from this tour to Capernaum, he was attended by a great number of people, who expreſſed a more than common deſire to hear the doctrines of the Goſpel. An incident abundantly ſufficient to engage the attention of this divine teacher, who was always careful to cultivate the latent ſeeds of virtue, and cheriſh the leaſt appearance of piety and religion.

But this deſire of the people was not the ſole motive that excited his compaſſion towards them: he well knew they were wholly deſtitute of ſpiritual teachers; for the Scribes and Phariſees, who ought to have inſtructed them, were blind, perverſe, and lazy guides, who inſtead of ſeeking the glory of the Almighty made it their whole buſineſs to ſupport and augment their own. They magnified the ritual ceremonies and traditions; but took no care to inſpire the people with a love for virtue. *To do juſtice, love mercy, and walk humbly with their God*, were no parts of their doctrine. The ſmall appearance of religion they entertained was wholly hypocritical; and the diſputes carried on with ſo much bitterneſs between the factions of the Phariſees and Sadducees, diſtracted the minds of the people.

The caſe of the inhabitants of Judah was therefore truly deplorable, and called loudly for the compaſſion of the Son of God, who always regarded the deſcendants of Jacob with the moſt tender affection. He ſaw the ſheep of Iſrael ſcattered on the barren waſtes of error and ſuperſtition, without a ſhepherd to lead them to the heavenly paſtures of the law and the prophets. He ſaw; he commiſerated their diſtreſs; and he reſolved to provide ſome remedy for it. Accordingly, he directed his apoſtles to intercede with the Almighty, who by his ſervants the prophets had ſown the ſeeds of piety and virtue in the minds of the Jews that he would not ſuffer the rich harveſt to be loſt for want of labourers. *The harveſt*, ſaid the bleſſed Jeſus to his diſciples, *truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harveſt, that he will ſend forth labourers into his harveſt*, Matt. ix. 37, 38.

Nor was he willing to omit the moſt powerful of all interceſſions to the throne of grace, his own prevailing prayer. And accordingly, aſcended to the top of a mountain, and there ſpent the night in making the moſt powerful petitions in behalf of *the loſt ſheep of Iſrael*, to his heavenly father.

Having ſpent the night in this pious exerciſe, he loſt no time in puting his beneficent intentions in execution; for no ſooner had darkneſs withdrawn her ſable veil, and the bluſhing rays of the morning adorned the chambers of the eaſt, than this benevolent Redeemer of mankind, called his diſciples to him, and choſe twelve, *whom he named apoſtles, to be always with him; and that he might ſend them forth to preach.* He ordained them to be conſtantly with him, that they might learn from his own mouth, the doctrines they were to preach to the whole world; that they might *ſee his glory*, the tranſcendent glory of the virtues which adorned his human life; and that they might be witneſſes of all the wondrous works he ſhould perform during his reſidence in this vale of miſery, and by which his miſſion from the courts of heaven was to be fully demonſtrated.

Theſe twelve perſons thus qualified, were to ſupply the people with that ſpiritual food they ſo greatly wanted, both while their maſter continued here below, and after his aſcenſion to the right hand of power.

And accordingly, as ſoon as they were properly qualified for ſo important an office, he ſent them out by two and two, into the moſt diſtant parts of Judea, to preach there the glad tidings of the Goſpel, and prepare the way for their maſter, the great ſhepherd of Iſrael.

And that nothing might be wanting to render their preaching acceptable to the people, and confirm the important doctrines they delivered, he inveſted them with full power to cure all diſeaſes, caſt out devils, and even to raiſe the dead.

Perhaps, the number of the twelve apoſtles was fixed upon rather than any other, to ſhew that God intended, by their miniſtry, to gather together the ſcattered remnant of the twelve tribes of Iſrael. But be that as it may, theſe twelve apoſtles conſtantly continued with him, from the time of their election, till he offered himſelf a ſacrifice on the croſs for the ſins of mankind, never departing from him unleſs by his own appointment.

All theſe perſons being illiterate Galileans, and at firſt deſtitute of all the qualifications neceſſary in the diſcharge of their duty, integrity alone excepted, were the moſt unlikely perſons in the world to confound the wiſdom of the wiſe, baffle the power of the mighty, overturn the many falſe religions which then flouriſhed every where under the protection of the civil government; and, in ſhort, to reform the manners of mankind, then univerſally corrupted. Had the choice of inſtruments for ſo grand an undertaking been committed to human prudence, ſuch doubtleſs would have been choſen, as were remarkable for learning, ſtrong

ſtrong reaſoning, and prevailing eloquence. But, behold, the wiſdom of God, infinitely ſuperior to that of man, acted very differently; for the treaſure of the Goſpel was committed to earthen veſſels, that the excellency of its power might in all countries appear to be of God. Accordingly, the religion which theſe illiterate Galileans taught through the world, exhibited a far juſter notion of things than the Grecian and Roman philoſophers were able to attain, though their lives were ſpent in ſtudy and contemplation. Hence by its own intrinſic ſplendour, as well as by the external glory of the miracles that accompanied it, this religion ſufficiently appeared to be wholly original and divine.

Beſides, the remarkable ſucceſs that attended it, was anſwerable to its dignity and truth. It was received every where by the bulk of mankind with the higheſt applauſe, as ſomething they had been hitherto ſeeking in vain: while the maxims and precepts of the philoſophers never ſpread farther than their reſpective ſchools. It was therefore with the higheſt wiſdom, that the foundations of the church were laid in the labours of a few illiterate fiſhermen; for it demonſtrated with irreſiſtible evidence, that the immenſe fabric was at firſt raiſed, and is ſtill ſuſtained, not by the arm of fleſh, but purely by the hand of the Almighty.

After appointing the twelve apoſtles, he came down from the mountain, and was joyfully received by multitudes of people who were waiting for him in the plain, and preſſed to touch him; well knowing, that if they could only touch the border of his garment, they ſhould be healed of whatever diſtemper they were afflicted with. A ſufficient reaſon why they were continually waiting for him, and were willing to accompany him even into the remoteſt corners of the Wilderneſs.

Nor was it the low and vulgar only that crowded after Jeſus; perſons of the firſt rank and character came from diſtant parts of the country, to converſe with him, hear his doctrine, and be ſpectators of his wonderful works. It therefore evidently follows, that perſons of all ranks were deſirous of following him; and his deſire could be founded on nothing but the truth of his miracles.

After healing all the ſick among the multitude, he turned towards his diſciples, and delivered a divine diſcourſe, ſomething like that he had before preached to them on the mountain; but in the former, he only pronounced bleſſings, whereas in the latter, he added curſes alſo; and in this principally it differs from that recorded by St. Matthew: I ſhall therefore only ſelect a few paſſages from the ſermon now delivered, as I have given a large paraphraſe on the former.

Wo unto you that are rich, for you have received your conſolation, Luke vi. 24. Riches conſidered in themſelves have no tendency to render us the objects of the Almighty's hatred, unleſs accompanied with thoſe vices which too often flow from an opulent

fortune; as luxury, covetouſneſs, and the like. The wo therefore is here denounced againſt ſuch only as are contaminated with theſe vices; for thoſe who make a proper uſe of their wealth, and poſſeſs the virtues which ſhould accompany affluence, have no ſhare in the malediction.

Wo unto you that are full, for ye ſhall hunger. The pains ye ſhall ſuffer in a future life, ſhall be ſharp and excruciating. The opportunities you neglected of doing good to your afflicted brethren in this life, ſhall then be remembered with the moſt poignant grief, and bewailed with the moſt bitter lamentations.

Wo unto you that laugh now, for ye ſhall mourn and weep. This malediction of our bleſſed Saviour is not inconſiſtent with the apoſtle's precepts, which command Chriſtians always to rejoice. Neither is the mirth againſt which the wo is here denounced, to be underſtood of that conſtant chearfulneſs of temper, which ariſes in the breaſt of true Chriſtians, from the comfortable and chearful doctrine with which they are enlightened by the Goſpel, the aſſurance they have of reconciliation with God, the hope they have of everlaſting life, and the pleaſure they enjoy in the practice of virtue, and the other duties of religion; but it relates to that turbulent carnal mirth, that exceſſive levity and vanity of ſpirit, which ariſes not from any ſolid foundation, but from immoderate ſenſual pleaſures, or thoſe vain amuſements of life by which the giddy and the gay contrive to ſpend their time; that ſort of mirth which diſſipates thought, leaves no time for conſideration, and gives them an utter averſion to all ſerious reflection. Perſons who conſtantly indulge themſelves in this kind of mirth ſhall weep and mourn eternally, when they are excluded from the joys of heaven, and baniſhed for ever from the preſence of God, by the light of whoſe countenance all the righteous are enlivened, and made tranſcendently happy.

Wo unto you when all men ſhall ſpeak well of you, for ſo did their fathers to the falſe prophets. Wo unto you, if by propagating ſuch doctrine as encourages men in ſin, you ſhall gain to yourſelves the applauſe and flattery of the generality of men; for thus in old times did the falſe prophets and deceivers, who, accommodating their doctrines to the luſts and paſſions of men, were more careſſed and liſtened to with greater attention than the prophets of God.

CHAP. X.

Jeſus heals a Centurion's ſlave at Capernaum. Delivers the apoſtles their commiſſions and inſtructions. Retires to Nain, and raiſes the Widow's ſon from the dead.

WHEN our bleſſed Redeemer had finiſhed this heavenly diſcourſe, he repaired to Capernaum, and was met by certain meſſengers from a Centurion, deſiring him to come and heal a ſervant, who was dear to him and ready to die.

This

This Centurion, from the account given of him by the Evangeliſt, ſeems to have been a proſelyte to the Jewiſh religion, as he was a lover of the ſons of Jacob, and had erected for them a place of worſhip; and accordingly the inhabitants of Capernaum, ſtrongly eſpouſed his cauſe on this occaſion, *ſaying, that he was worthy for whom he ſhould do this. For he loveth our nation, and hath built us a ſynagogue*, Luke vii. 4, 5.

There was not the leaſt danger that this petition would be rejected by the bleſſed Jeſus, who ſought all occaſions of doing good to the children of men. Accordingly he very readily accompanied the meſſengers; but before he came to the houſe, he was met by ſome of the Centurion's friends, who expreſſed the high idea that officer entertained of his power, and deſired that he would not take the trouble of coming to his houſe, as his word was abundantly ſufficient to perform the cure. At this meſſage, Jeſus turned himſelf about, and ſaid to the multitude, *I ſay unto you, I have not found ſo great faith, no not in Iſrael*, Luke viii. 9.

The perſons having delivered their meſſage, returned to the houſe, and found the ſervant who had been ſick perfectly recovered.

It has been generally thought, that this miracle and that mentioned in Matt. viii. are the ſame; but this is a miſtake. The Centurion in the former came in perſon, but in the latter the petition was ſent by the elders of Capernaum. There is not the leaſt hint in the firſt miracle that the Centurion was a proſelyte; but he in the ſecond is ſaid to have been a lover of the Jewiſh nation, and to have built them a ſynagogue. Several other particulars, which prove theſe miracles to have been really different, will eaſily occur to the reader, and therefore I ſhall not here enumerate them; what has been ſaid will, I preſume, be ſufficient to remove any objection that may be offered againſt my conſidering them as different tranſactions.

Having performed this miracle on the Centurion's ſervant, he repaired to Peter's houſe to eat bread; but the multitude came again together, and ſurrounded the houſe in a very tumultuous manner, demanding, in all probability, that he would heal their ſick; and it was not without difficulty they were diſperſed by his friends.

The people being departed, Jeſus called unto him the twelve apoſtles he had before choſen, and conferred on them the power of working miracles, in confirmation of the doctrines they were appointed to preach, and delivered them ſuch inſtructions as he thought neceſſary to enable them to diſcharge the duties of this important commiſſion.

Go, ſaid their heavenly maſter, *and preach, ſaying, the kingdom of heaven is at hand.* Publiſh in every corner of Judea, the glad tidings of the Goſpel, and the near approach of the great Meſſiah's kingdom; not a temporal but a ſpiritual empire, conſiſting of righteouſneſs and peace.

And

And that they might be inured to thoſe hardſhips and dangers which were to attend them in their preaching after the death of their maſter, our Lord forbad them to provide any thing for their journey; teaching them to rely wholly on the providence of God for ſupport in every diſtreſs, and to have recourſe to his protection in every danger.

The apoſtles had, perhaps, flattered themſelves with the pleaſing expectation, that the glad tidings they were going to publiſh, and the miraculous cures they were enabled to perform, would procure them an honouable reception wherever they came. Their maſter, however, told them the event would not in any manner anſwer their expectations; but were every where to be deſpiſed, perſecuted, delivered into the hands of the rulers, and puniſhed as wicked men. But at the ſame time he promiſed them the aid of the Almighty, and gave them inſtructions for their behaviour in every particular. He added, that thoſe who rejected their meſſage, ſhould be treated with ſeverity by the great judge of all the earth; but thoſe who received them kindly, and gave even a cup of cold water to the leaſt of his diſciples, for their maſter's ſake, ſhould not fail of receiving a large reward.

The apoſtles having received this commiſſion, viſited all the parts of Paleſtine, where the Jews inhabited, preaching the Goſpel and the doctrine of repentance, working miracles for its confirmation, and particularly healed the ſick, while our bleſſed Saviour continued the courſe of his miniſtry in Galilee.

The apoſtles being returned from their tour, Jeſus went to Nain, a town ſituated near Endor, about two miles ſouth of Mount Tabor, attended by many of his diſciples, and a great multitude of people.

On their coming to the entrance of the city, a melancholy ſcene preſented itſelf to the eyes of Jeſus, and his followers. *Behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only ſon of his mother, and ſhe was a widow*, Luke vii. 12. Who would not have imagined, that God had indeed *forgotten to be gracious, and in his anger ſhut up his tender mercies* from this poor widow, ſuffering under the heavieſt load, and labouring under the moſt oppreſſive burden of diſtreſs? deprived of her ſon, her only ſon, in the flower of his youth, when he might have repaid his mother' ſtoils, and been to her in the place of a huſband; of that huſband ſhe had long ſince loſt, and whoſe loſs was ſupportable only through the comfort of this child, the ſurviving image of his departed father, the balm of all her grief, the hope of her afflicted ſoul! Who now ſhall adminiſh conſolation to this ſolitary widow, to this lonely parent, bereaved of her huſband, deprived of her child! what miſery can be more complicated! what can be more natural than that ſhe ſhould *refuſe to be comforted*, that ſhe ſhould *go down to the grave with mourning*, and viſit the chambers of death, the reſidence of the beloved remains of her huſband and her ſon, with ſorrow!

Towards

Engraved for the Life of our Saviour.



Christ raiseth the Widow's Son. Luke VII. 12. &c.


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Towards that receptacle of mortality, that dreary waſte of forgetfulneſs, the mournful funeral was now, with ſlow and ſolemn pomp, advancing, when the compaſſionate Redeemer of mankind met the melancholy proceſſion, compoſed of a long train of her weeping neighbours and relations, who pitied her diſtreſs, ſympathized with her in this great affliction, and were melted with compaſſion at her deplorable circumſtances; but ſighs and tears were all they had to offer, relief could not be expected from a human being: their commiſeration, though grateful to her oppreſſed ſoul, could neither reſtore the huſband nor the ſon; ſubmiſſion and patience were the only leſſons they could preach, or this afflicted daughter of Iſrael learn.

But though man was unable to relieve the diſtreſſes of this diſconſolate widow, the Saviour of the world, who beheld the melancholy proceſſion, was both able and willing to do it. There was no need of a powerful ſolicitor to implore aſſiſtance from the Son of God, his own compaſſion was abundantly ſufficient: *When the Lord ſaw her, he had compaſſion on her:* he both ſought the patient, and offered the cure unexpectedly. *Weep not*, ſaid the bleſſed Jeſus to this afflicted woman. Alas! it had been wholly in vain to bid her refrain from tears who had loſt her only child, the ſole comfort of her age, without adminiſtring the balm of comfort, to heal her broken ſpirit. This our compaſſionate Redeemer well knew; and therefore, immediately advancing towards the corps, *he touched the bier:* the pomp of the funeral was inſtantly ſtopped, ſilence cloſed every mouth, and expectation filled the breaſt of every ſpectator. But this deep ſuſpenſe did not long continue; that glorious voice that ſhall one day call our dead bodies from the grave, filled their ears with theſe remarkable words: *Young man, I ſay unto thee ariſe.* Nor was this powerful command uttered without its conſtant effect. *He ſpake and it was done:* he called with authority, and immediately *he that was dead ſat up, and began to ſpeak; and he reſtored him to his mother.* He did not ſhew him around to the multitude; but, by a ſingular act of modeſty and humanity, delivered him to his late afflicted, now aſtoniſhed and rejoicing mother, to intimate, that in compaſſion to her great diſtreſs, he had wrought this ſtupendous miracle.

A holy and an awful fear fell on all who heard and ſaw this aſtoniſhing event; *and they glorified God, ſaying, that a great prophet is riſen up among us; and that God had viſited his people.*

I cannot conclude the account of this miracle, without obſerving that it is liable to no objection; and therefore abundantly proves, that the power of the bleſſed Jeſus was truly and abſolutely divine. He met this funeral proceſſion by accident. It was compoſed of the greateſt part of the inhabitants of the city, who bewailed the diſconſolate ſtate of the afflicted widow, and therefore well knew that the youth was really dead. The powerful word which called the breathleſs body to life was deli-

livered in an audible voice before all the company, and even at the very gate of the city, the place of public resort. These circumstances abundantly prove the truth of the miracle; and that Jesus was the great prophet foretold by Moses, *the light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people of Israel.*

CHAP. XI.

Messengers sent by John the Baptist to Jesus, who vindicates the character of that prophet. Jesus dines with Simon the Pharisee, and is there anointed for the first time. Pious women support Jesus, and accompany him to the passover.

IT has been already observed, that Herod irritated at the freedom John the Baptist had taken in reproving his adulterous commerce with Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, had cast him into prison; and in this state he still continued, though his disciples were suffered to visit and converse with him. In one of these visits they had given him an account of our Saviour's having elected twelve Apostles to preach the Gospel, and of his miracles, particularly of his raising to life, the daughter of Jairus, and the son of the widow of Nain.

On hearing these wonderful relations, the Baptist immediately dispatched two of his disciples to Jesus, to ask him this important question: *Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?*

Accordingly, the disciples of John came to Jesus; and proposed the question of their master at the very time when he *cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits, and to many that were blind he gave sight*, Mat. xi. 21. Jesus therefore, instead of directly answering their question, bid them return, and inform their master what they had seen: *Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the Gospel is preached*, Mat. xi. 22. Go tell your master, that the very miracles the prophet Isaiah so long since foretold should be wrought by the Messiah, you have yourselves seen performed.

The scriptures on all occasions acquaint us, that the Baptist, through the whole course of his ministry, had borne constant and ample testimony to our Saviour's divine mission: that he exhorted those who came to him, to rest their faith not on himself, but on *him that should come after him*; and that as soon as he was acquainted who Jesus was by a visible descent of the Holy Ghost, and a voice from heaven, he made it his business to dispose the Jews in general, and his own disciples in particular, to receive and reverence him, by testifying every where, that he was the *Son of God*, the *Lamb of God who came down from heaven*, and *spake the words of God*, and *to whom God had given the spirit by measure.*

The Baptiſt therefore well knew who Jeſus was; and, conſequently, he did not ſend his diſciples to aſk this queſtion to ſolve any doubts in his mind concerning the ſaviour of the world.

But it will be demanded, what elſe could induce the Baptiſt to aſk ſuch a queſtion? To this ſome anſwer, that he had no other intention than to ſatisfy his diſciples that Jeſus was the Meſſiah ſo long expected among the Jews; and to engage them to follow a more perfect maſter, eſpecially as he himſelf was now on the point of leaving the world.

This ſolution is doubtleſs partly right; but it does not ſeem to remove the whole difficulty, as it is plain, from the very account recorded by the Evangeliſt, that the queſtion had actually ſome relation to himſelf; and therefore we muſt remove the difficulty by ſome other method. In order to which, it muſt be remembered, that John had been long confined in priſon; and being perſuaded that it was neceſſary for him to preach the Goſpel, and prepare men to receive the kingdom of the Meſſiah; and for that reaſon from the very time of his impriſonment, earneſtly expected, that the Meſſiah would exert his power to procure his releaſe. But on hearing that Jeſus had choſen twelve illiterate fiſhermen to preach the Goſpel, and furniſhed them with miraculous powers, in order to enable them to perform ſo great a work; and that two perſons of no conſequence were raiſed from the dead, while he was ſuffered to remain in priſon, he began to think himſelf neglected, and his ſervices diſregarded. He therefore ſent two of his diſciples, to aſk him this queſtion, *Art thou he that ſhould come; or, look we for another?* Not that he entertained any doubt of his being the true Meſſiah, intending nothing more by making the demand than to complain that Jeſus had not acted the part which he thought the Meſſiah ſhould have acted: and that this was really the caſe ſeems ſufficiently plain from the caution added by our bleſſed Saviour himſelf, *And bleſſed is he whoſoever ſhall not be offended in me*; as if he had ſaid, when you have informed your maſter of what you have ſeen and heard, tell him, that he would do well not to be offended either at the choice of the Apoſtles, or that no miracle has been wrought for his releaſe.

Hence we ſee, that impatience on account of his long confinement was the true reaſon for the Baptiſt's ſending his diſciples with this queſtion to Jeſus; and that the purport of the anſwer was to teach him ſubmiſſion in a caſe that was plainly above the reach of his judgment.

But that this converſation might leave no impreſſion on the minds of the people diſadvantageous to the character of the Baptiſt, our bleſſed Saviour thought proper to place it in a proper point of light. He praiſed his invincible courage and conſtancy, which was not to be overcome, or *like a reed to be ſhaken with the wind*: his auſtere and mortified life; for he was not *clothed in ſoft raiment*, like thoſe who wait in the palaces of kings: adding, that he was *a pro-*

phet,

phet, nay, more than a prophet. For this is he of whom it is written, Behold I ſend my meſſenger before thy face, which ſhall prepare thy way before thee. But ſubjoined, *notwithſtanding, he that is leaſt in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.*

Nor will this appear ſtrange, when it is conſidered, that though the Baptiſt excelled all the prophets that were before him, yet the leaſt inſpired perſon in the kingdom of heaven, the leaſt apoſtle, or preacher of the Goſpel, was greater than he; becauſe, by conſtantly attending on Jeſus, they were much better acquainted with his character, diſpoſition, and doctrine, than the Baptiſt, who had only ſeen him tranſiently: wherefore in reſpect of their perſonal knowledge of the Meſſiah, the apoſtles greatly excelled the Baptiſt. They were alſo employed not in making preparation for the Meſſiah's kingdom, but in erecting it; and conſequently greater than the Baptiſt, with regard to the dignity of their office. Moreover, by having the gift of miracles, and the like, conferred on them for that office, they were far ſuperior to him, with regard to illumination. They were ſo fully poſſeſſed by the ſpirit, that on all occaſions they could declare the will of God infallibly, being as it were living oracles: and, having been the ſubjects of antient prophecies, they had been long expected by the people of God.

Having thus ſhewn the greatneſs of the Baptiſt's character, and wherein he was ſurpaſſed by the diſciples, our bleſſed Saviour took occaſion from thence to blame the perverſeneſs of the age, in rejecting both his own and the Baptiſt's teſtimony.

It ſeems that the Scribes and Phariſees, ſeeing their pretended mortifications eclipſed by the real auſterity of the Baptiſt, they impudently affirmed that his living in the deſerts, his ſhunning the company of men, the coarſeneſs of his cloathing, the abſtemiouſneſs of his diet, and the other ſeverities he practiſed, were the effects of his being poſſeſſed by an apoſtate ſpirit, or of a religious melancholy. *For John came neither eating nor drinking, and ye ſay he hath a devil,* Matt. xi. 18.

On the other hand, they would not liſten to the heavenly doctrines preached by Chriſt, becauſe he did not ſeparate himſelf from ſociety; attributing his free manner of living to a certain looſeneſs of diſpoſition, though they well knew that he obſerved the ſtricteſt temperance himſelf, and never encouraged the vices of others, either by diſſimulation or example. *The ſon of man came eating and drinking, and they ſay, Behold a man gluttonous and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and ſinners: but wiſdom is juſtified of all her children,* Matt. xi. 19.

He next proceeded to upbraid the ſeveral cities where his moſt wonderful works had been performed. For though they had heard him preach many awakening ſermons, and ſeen him perform ſuch aſtoniſhing miracles, ſuch as would have converted Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom, cities infamous for their impiety, contempt of religion, pride, luxury, and debauchery;

bauchery; yet ſo great was their obſtinacy, that they perſiſted in their wickedneſs, notwithſtanding all he had done to convert them from the evil of their ways. *Wo unto thee, Chorazin, wo unto thee, Bethſaida; for if the mighty works that have been done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in ſackcloth and aſhes. But I ſay unto you, it ſhall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. And thou, Capernaum, that art exalted unto heaven, ſhalt be brought down to hell; for if the mighty works that have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained unto this day. But I ſay unto you, that it ſhall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you,* Matt. xi. 21, &c.

After pronouncing theſe woes on the cities which had neglected to profit by his mighty works, he concluded his diſcourſe with theſe heavenly words: *Come to me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you reſt. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye ſhall find reſt to your ſouls. For my yoke is eaſy and my burden is light,* Matt. xi. 28, &c.

Surely this paſſage muſt engage the moſt ſerious attention and particular regard of every reader; whether the greatneſs of the ſpeaker, the importance of his meſſage, or the affectionate manner of his addreſs, have any weight, have any force, have any power, to affect the ſoul. It is Chriſt, the Almighty Redeemer, the Son of the moſt high; he into whoſe hands, as our mediator, all things are delivered of his father; he unto whom all power in heaven and earth is given; even he who ſhall come in the clouds of heaven to judge all the inhabitants of the earth, and even by thoſe words he hath himſelf delivered. It is this wonderful perſon who ſpeaks, declaring at once his great willingneſs to receive, and his own ſupreme power, to give that reſt and peace to the ſoul, which is the purſuit of every ſon of Adam, and is the gift of his religion only. Nor is the invitation leſs important; containing the whole glad tidings of the Goſpel to every oppreſſed and burdened ſoul. And that nothing may prevent our accepting this benevolent offer, he invites, with the moſt affectionate tenderneſs, not the great, the happy, and the powerful, nor the merry-hearted, and the ſons of joy, but *all that labour and are heavy laden,* all that are under the bondage of ſin and ſorrow: and thoſe he calls, not with a deſire to expoſe their miſeries, to puniſh their offences, or to diſplay his own glory, but ſolely with a view to render them happy. *Come,* ſays he, *come to me, I entreat you to come, and I will give you reſt;* I myſelf will relieve and releaſe you from your heavy burdens; come to me, and you ſhall find perfect reſt and peace to your ſouls. *Take my yoke upon you, for it is eaſy, and my burden, for it is light.*

And can it be poſſible, that creatures of a day like us; can it be poſſible that *mortals who have but a ſhort time to live, and are full of miſery,*

who come up and are cut down like a flower, who flee, as it were a ſhadow, and never continue in one ſtay; can it be poſſible, that they ſhould reject and diſregard a call ſo full of love, ſo full of affection, of ſuch infinite conſequence, of ſuch unſpeakable advantage? Can they reject the love of him, who gave them reſt, took their burdens upon himſelf; and who, after all his ſufferings, deſires them only to *come*, to exchange their own oppreſſive burdens for his lightſome yoke; to abandon their ſins and ſorrows, and become his diſciples; to love and obey him, and thence to be happy? Can we poſſibly deſpiſe ſuch grace, refuſe ſuch offers, fly from reſt thus freely propoſed to us, and prefer the heavy yoke of ſin, and the cruel pangs of a wounded conſcience?

After finiſhing theſe diſcourſes, one of the Phariſees deſired he would *eat with him*, which invitation the bleſſed Jeſus accepted, and accompanied him to his houſe, and ſat down to meat. But had not continued long at the table, before a woman who had lately left the paths of vice for thoſe of virtue, placed herſelf behind him, and from a deep conviction of her former crimes, and the obligations ſhe owed the Saviour of mankind for bringing her to a ſenſe of them, ſhed ſuch quantities of tears, that they trickled down on his feet, which, according to the cuſtom of the country, were then bare. But obſerving that her tears had wet the feet of her beloved inſtructor, ſhe immediately wiped them with the hairs of her head, kiſſed them with the moſt ardent affection, and anointed them with precious ointment ſhe had brought with her for that purpoſe.

It was a cuſtom among the inhabitants of the eaſt, to pour fragrant oils on the heads of ſuch gueſts as they intended particularly to honour, while they ſat at meat; and probably the woman's original intention was to anoint Jeſus in the uſual manner. But being exceedingly humbled on account of her former crimes, ſhe could not preſume to take freedom with him, and therefore poured it on his feet, to expreſs at once the greatneſs of her love, and the profoundneſs of her humility.

The Phariſee, who had attentively obſerved the woman, concluded from thence, that our Saviour could not be a prophet. *This man*, ſaid the Phariſee to himſelf, *if he were a prophet, would have known who, and what manner of woman this is that touched him; for ſhe is a ſinner*, Luke vii. 38.

But though Simon ſpoke this only in his heart, his thoughts were not concealed from the great Redeemer of mankind, who, to convince him that he was a prophet; and that he knew not only the characters of men, but even the ſecret thoughts of their hearts, he immediately converſed with him on the very ſubject he had been revolving in his mind. He did not indeed expoſe him before the company, by relating what he had ſaid in ſecret, but with remarkable delicacy pointed out to Simon alone the unreaſonableneſs of his thoughts. *Simon*, ſaid the bleſſed Jeſus, *I have ſomething to ſay to thee.*

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There was a certain creditor, which had two debtors: The one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him moſt? Simon anſwered and ſaid, I ſuppoſe that he to whom he forgave moſt. And he ſaid unto him, thou haſt rightly judged. And then immediately applied this ſhort parable to the ſubject of the woman, on which the Phariſee had ſo unjuſtly reaſoned within himſelf. *Simon*, continued our Saviour, *ſeeſt thou this woman? I entered into thine houſe, thou gaveſt me no water for my feet; but ſhe hath waſhed my feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gaveſt me no kiſs: but this woman ſince the time I came in hath not ceaſed to kiſs my feet. Mine head with oil thou didſt not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment*, Luke vii. 44, &c.

The extraordinary kindneſſes of this woman were in no danger of loſing their reward from the bleſſed Jeſus, who enjoyed the ſofter and finer paſſions of human nature in their utmoſt perfection. And accordingly he added, in purſuance to the kind invitation he had before made, to weary and heavy-laden ſinners, *Wherefore I ſay unto thee, her ſins which are many, are forgiven; for ſhe loved much: but to whom little is forgiven the ſame loveth little*, Luke vii. 47.

Our bleſſed Saviour having thus vindicated the action of the woman to the company; and rebuked, with great delicacy, the unjuſt ſuſpicions of Simon, he turned himſelf to the woman and in the kindeſt manner aſſured her, that *her ſins were forgiven*. But the power he aſſumed in forgiving ſins, greatly offended the Jews, who not being acquainted with his divinity, conſidered his ſpeech as derogatory to the honour of the Almighty. Jeſus, however, contemned their malicious murmurs, and repeated his aſſurances, telling the woman that her faith had ſaved her, and bidding her depart in peace.

The next day Jeſus travelled from Capernaum to different parts of Galilee, going *through every village, preaching and ſhewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God*, Luke viii. 1. That is, he declared to the people the welcome tidings of the Almighty's being willing to be reconciled to the children of men, on condition of their repentance, and embracing the precepts of the Goſpel.

And after this ſhort tour, he repaired to Jeruſalem, to keep the paſſover, being the ſecond feaſt of that kind ſince his public miniſtry. In this journey he was accompanied by certain pious women, *who miniſtred to him of their ſubſtance.*

CHAP. XII.

The impotent man cured at the pool of Betheſda. The diſciples pluck the ears of corn on the ſabbath. The man with the withered hand is cured. Another man with a withered hand cured near Jeruſalem. Jeſus is viſited by his mother and his brethren.

JESUS having entered the antient city of Jeruſalem, ſo long famous for being the dwelling-place of the moſt

high, he came near the ſheep-gate, to the publick bath or pool called in the Hebrew tongue *Betheſda*, that is, *the houſe of mercy*, on account of the miracles wrought there by the ſalutary effects of the water at certain ſeaſons. This bath was ſurrounded by five porches or cloiſters, in which thoſe who frequented the place were ſheltered both from the heat and cold; and were particularly ſerviceable to the diſeaſed and infirm, who crouded hither to find relief in their afflictions. Theſe porches were now filled with *a great multitude of impotent folk of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel deſcended into the pool, and troubled the water. Whoſoever then firſt after the troubling of the water, ſtepped in, was made whole of whatſoever diſeaſe he had*, John v. 3, 4.

Such is the account of this miraculous pool given us by St. John, the only writer who has mentioned it. But a variety of queſtions have ariſen concerning the place, the time, and the nature of the pool; queſtions which will perhaps never be anſwered, becauſe the pool of Betheſda is not mentioned by any Jewiſh writer ſacred or prophane.

With regard to the time when this miraculous effect took place, nothing preciſely can be determined; but it is almoſt univerſally agreed, that it could not be long before the coming of our Saviour; and that the miracle was intended to lead us to the Son of God. For the gift of prophecy and of miracles had ceaſed among the Jews for above four hundred years; and therefore to raiſe in them a more ardent deſire for the coming of the Meſſiah, and to induce them to be more circumſpect in obſerving the ſigns of his coming, God was pleaſed to favour them with this remarkable ſign at Betheſda. And as the deſcendants of Jacob, in the laſt times, were very obnoxious not only to the irruptions and tyranny of the Gentiles, but had wholly loſt their liberty; ſo God favoured them with this eminent token of his favour, this wonderful pool, that they might not deſpair of the promiſes made to their forefathers being fulfilled.

It was ſituated near the gate of victims, which were figures of the propitiatory ſacrifice of Chriſt, that they might be convinced God had yet a regard to the poſterity of Abraham, and the worſhip which he himſelf had eſtabliſhed; and might thus ſupport themſelves with the pleaſing hope of the coming of the Meſſiah, the great angel of the covenant, to his temple.

And as this miracle of the angel deſcending from heaven began when the coming of the Meſſiah was at hand, to adviſe them of the ſpeedy and near approach of that promiſed ſalvation; ſo Chriſt entered theſe porches, which were ſituated without the temple, and performed the miracle I ſhall preſently relate, to indicate what was the true intent of this gift of healing, namely, to lead men to himſelf, *the fountain opened for ſin and for uncleanneſs*: and the waters was troubled only at this certain ſeaſon of the paſſover, or at other ſtated

periods,

Engraved for the Life of Our Saviour.



The impotent Man cured at the Pool of Bethesda. John V. 2, &c.

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periods, and one only healed each time the angel deſcended, to ſhew them at once the weakneſs of the law, and the great difference between that and the goſpel diſpenſation; and to teach them not to reſt ſatisfied with the corporeal benefit only, as in the miniſtration of an angel; but to reflect attentively on the promiſes of the Meſſiah's approaching advent.

Theſe few obſervations I conceived might not be unacceptable to the reader, with regard to the celebrated pool, and ſhall now return to the bleſſed Jeſus, who thought proper to viſit the porches of Bethesda, now crowded with perſons labouring under divers diſeaſes.

Among theſe diſtreſſed mortals, was one who had laboured under his infirmity no leſs than thirty and eight years. The length and greatneſs of this man's affliction, which were well known to the Son of God, were ſufficient to excite his tender compaſſion, and make him the happy object to demonſtrate that his power of healing was infinitely ſuperior to the ſanative virtue of the waters; while the reſt were ſuffered to remain in their affliction.

Had our Lord at this time reſtored none of them to health, he would not have acted contrary to the general account which the Evangeliſts give of his goodneſs on other occaſions, namely, *that he healed all who came to him.* For ſuch diſeaſed perſons who left their habitations thro' a perſuaſion of his power and kindneſs were proper objects of his mercy; whereas the ſick in the cloiſters of Bethesda were no more ſo than the other ſick throughout the whole country, whom he could have cured with a ſingle word of his mouth, had he pleaſed to have uttered it.

The bleſſed Jeſus now approached the man whom he had ſingled out as the perſon on whom to manifeſt his power: he aſked him whether he was deſirous of being made whole? A queſtion which muſt induce the man to declare publickly his melancholy caſe, in the hearing of the multitude, and conſequently, render the miracle more conſpicuous. And as this was done on the ſabbath-day, our bleſſed Saviour ſeems to have wrought it, to rouſe the Sons of Jacob from their lethargy, and convince the inhabitants of Jeruſalem, that the long expected Meſſiah was now come, and that *God had actually viſited his people.*

The impotent man beholding Jeſus with a ſorrowful countenance, and underſtanding that he meant his being healed by the ſanative virtue of the waters, anſwered, in a plaintive accent, *Sir, I have no man when the waters is troubled to put me into the pool, but while I am coming another ſteppeth in before me,* John v. 7. But the compaſſionate Redeemer of mankind ſoon convinced him that he was not to owe his cure to the ſalutary nature of the waters, but to the unbounded power of the Son of God, and accordingly ſaid to him, *Riſe, take up thy bed and walk.* Nor was the heavenly mandate any ſooner uttered, than the impotent man, to the aſtoniſhment of the multitude, *was made whole: and took up his bed and walked,* John v. 9.

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So ſtupendous a work could not fail of having a proper effect on the ſpectators; and his carrying his bed on the ſabbath-day, which the Jews conſidered as a profanation of that day of reſt, tended greatly to ſpread the fame of the miracle over the whole city. Nor did the man ſcruple to obey the commands of his kind phyſician: he well knew that perſon who had the power of working ſuch miracles muſt be a great prophet; and, conſequently, that his injunction could not be ſinful. He therefore thought that he gave a ſufficient anſwer to thoſe Jews, who told him it was not lawful to carry his bed on the ſabbath-day, to ſay, *he that made me whole, the ſame ſaid unto me, take up thy bed and walk*, John v. 11. He that reſtored my ſtrength in an inſtant, and removed, with a ſingle word, a diſeaſe that had many years afflicted me, commanded me, at the ſame time, to take up my bed and walk; and ſurely a perſon endued with ſuch power from on high, could not have ordered me to do any thing but what is truly right.

The enemies of the Chriſtian doctrine would do well to conſider, that this ſignal miracle was performed in an inſtant, and even when the perſon did not expect any ſuch favour, nor even knew the perſon to whom he owed it. None therefore can pretend that imagination had any ſhare in performing it. In ſhort, the narrative of this miracle of mercy ſufficiently proves, that the perſon who performed it was really divine.

Soon after the miracle was performed, Jeſus met in the temple the man he had healed at the pool of Betheſda; and took the opportunity of reminding him, that as he was now freed from an infirmity he had brought on himſelf by irregular courſes, he ſhould be careful to abſtain from them for the future, leſt the Almighty ſhould think proper to afflict him in a more terrible manner. The man, overjoyed at having found the divine phyſician, who had relieved him from his melancholy condition, repaired to the Scribes and Phariſees, and, with a heart overflowing with gratitude, innocently told them that it was Jeſus who had performed on him ſo aſtoniſhing a cure, being doubtleſs perſuaded that they would rejoice at beholding ſo great a prophet.

But, alas! this was far from being the caſe: the rulers of Iſrael, inſtead of being pleaſed with accounts of his many ſtupendous works of mercy and kindneſs, attacked him tumultuouſly in the temple, and probably carried him before the Sanhedrim, with an intention to take away his life, merely becauſe he had done good on the ſabbath-day.

Jeſus, however, ſoon vindicated, by irrefragable arguments, the propriety of his works; obſerving that, in performing works of mercy and beneficence on the ſabbath-day, he only imitated his heavenly father, the God of Jacob, whoſe providence was continually employed, without any regard to times or ſeaſons, in doing good for the children of men. And ſurely he muſt be more than

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blind, who cannot diſcover, that the Almighty, on the ſabbaths as well as on other days, ſupports the whole frame of the univerſe; and, by the inviſible operations of his power, continues the motion of the heavenly bodies, on the revolution of which the viciſſitude of day and night, of ſummer and winter, ſo neceſſary to the production of the fruits of the earth, depend.

But the Jews were not to be convinced by argument. Nay, the very apology increaſed their malice, as he claimed a peculiar relation to God; and by aſſerting that he acted like him, inſinuated that he was equal to the Almighty himſelf.

The Saviour of the world did not deny this concluſion; but ſhewed that he acted agreeably to the will of God, was equal with him in power, doing whatever he ſaw done by his father; a convincing proof of his father's love for him. *Verily, verily, I ſay unto you, the Son can do nothing of himſelf, but what he ſeeth the Father do: for what things ſoever he doeth, theſe alſo doeth the Son likewiſe. For the Father loveth the Son, and ſheweth him all things that himſelf doeth: and he will ſhew him greater works than thoſe, that you may marvel,* John v. 19, 20.

The bleſſed Jeſus added, that he had not only power to heal the ſick, but even to raiſe the dead; and that his father had conſtituted him the univerſal judge of the world; and, therefore, thoſe who refuſed to honour him refuſed to honour the father. But whoever believed on him ſhould inherit eternal life.

And, in order to convince them of the truth of what he had advanced, and that he was actually inveſted with the power of raiſing the dead, he deſired them to remember the undoubted inſtances he had already given of it, in reſtoring the daughter of Jairus, and the widow's ſon of Nain, to life; and conſequently, that he could, on any future occaſion, exert the ſame power: *Verily, verily, I ſay unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead ſhall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear ſhall live. For as the Father hath life in himſelf, ſo hath he given to the Son to have life in himſelf. And hath given him authority to execute juſtice alſo, becauſe he is the Son of man,* John v. 25, 26.

But, added the Saviour of the world, be not ſurpriſed at the power of raiſing a few individuals from the dead, and the authority of inflicting puniſhment on a ſmall number of the human race, I have a far greater power committed to me, even that of raiſing of all the ſons of Adam at the laſt day, and of judging and rewarding every one of them according to his works. *Marvel not at this, for the hour is coming in which all that are in the graves ſhall come forth: they that have done good to the reſurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the reſurrection of damnation,* John v. 28, 29.

In that great day every one will receive his juſt reward; for the tremendous judge has been privy to all the actions of the ſons of men, from the beginning to the end of time;

nor has he any intereſt to purſue, or any inclination to ſatisfy, different from thoſe of his heavenly father. *And my judgment is true, becauſe I ſeek not my own will, but the will of my Father, who ſent me*, John v. 30.

Theſe were very grand aſſertions of his own dignity. But he did not require his hearers to believe them merely on his own teſtimony: he appealed to that of John, who was a burning and a ſhining light; and in whom for a time they greatly rejoiced, becauſe the prophetic ſpirit which had ſo long ceaſed in Iſrael was revived in that holy man. Nay, he appealed to a much greater teſtimony than that of John, even that of the God of Jacob himſelf; who was continually bearing witneſs to the truth of his miſſion, by the many miracles he empowered him to perform, and who, at his baptiſm had, in an audible voice from the courts of heaven, declared him to be *his beloved Son*: a voice which multitudes of people had heard, and probably even ſome of thoſe to whom he was now ſpeaking.

The Jews had long expected the Meſſiah; but they had expected him to appear as a temporal prince, who would not only reſtore the former luſtre of the throne of David, but infinitely augment it, and even place it over all the kingdoms of the earth. And hence they were unwilling to acknowledge Jeſus for their Meſſiah, notwithſtanding the proofs of his miſſion were ſo undeniable, becauſe they muſt in ſo doing have abandoned all their grand ideas of a temporal kingdom. Our bleſſed Saviour therefore deſired them to conſult their own ſcriptures, particularly the writings of the prophets, where they would find the characters of the Meſſiah diſplayed, and be fully convinced they were all fulfilled in his perſon.

He alſo gave them to underſtand, that the proofs of his miſſion were as full and clear as poſſible, being ſupported by the actions of his life, which in all things agreed with his doctrine; for he never ſought the applauſe of men, or affected ſecular power, but was always innocent and humble, though he well knew that theſe virtues made him appear little in the eyes of thoſe who had no idea of a ſpiritual kingdom, but expected the Meſſiah would appear in all the pomp of ſecular authority.

In ſhort, the fatal infidelity of the Jews was principally owing to their pride. They had long filled the minds of the people with grand ideas of the glory and power of the Meſſiah's kingdom; they had repreſented him as a potent prince, who was to appear at once adorned with all the enſigns of power: and therefore to have aſcribed that auguſt character to a mere teacher of righteouſneſs, deſtitute even of the ordinary advantages of birth, fortune, and erudition, would have been ſo plain a confeſſion of their ignorance of the ſcriptures, as muſt have expoſed them to the ridicule and contempt of the whole people.

Our bleſſed Saviour added, that he himſelf ſhould not be their only accuſer to the God of Jacob, for their infidelity; but Moſes, their great legiſlator,

giſlator, in whom they truſted, would join in that unwelcome office; for by denying him to be the Meſſiah, they denied the writings of that prophet. *For had ye*, added he, *believed Moſes, you would have believed me; for he wrote of me: but if ye believe not his writings, how ſhall ye believe my words?* John v. 46, 47.

Thus did the bleſſed Jeſus aſſert himſelf to be the Son of God, the great judge of the whole earth, and the Meſſiah promiſed by the prophets; and at the ſame time gave them ſuch convincing proofs of his being ſent from God, that nothing could be ſaid againſt them.

But however irrefragable his reaſons and arguments were, they did not in the leaſt abate the malice of the Scribes and Phariſees; for the very next ſabbath, upon his diſciples plucking a few ears of corn as they paſſed through the fields, and eating the grain after rubbing it out in their hands, they again exclaimed againſt this violation of the ſabbath. But our bleſſed Saviour ſoon convinced them of their error by ſhewing, both from the example of David, and the conſtant practice of their own prieſts, who never omitted the neceſſary work of the temple on the ſabbath-day, that works of neceſſity were often permitted, even tho' they break a ritual command; that acts of mercy were the moſt acceptable ſervices to God on any day whatever: that it was inverting the order of things to ſuppoſe that *man was made for the ſabbath, and not the ſabbath for the benefit of man.* Adding, that if the ſervice of the temple ſhould be ſaid to claim a particular diſpenſation from the law of the ſabbath, he and his diſciples, whoſe buſineſs of promoting the ſalvation of mankind was of equal importance, might juſtly claim the ſame exemption; as they were carrying on a much nobler work than the prieſts who attended on the ſervice of the temple. Thus did our bleſſed Saviour prove, that works of mercy ſhould not be left undone, though attended with the violation of ſome of the moſt ſacred inſtitutions of the ceremonial law.

Soon after this diſpute with the Scribes and Phariſees, our bleſſed Saviour entered one of the ſynagogues of Jeruſalem on the ſabbath-day, and found there a man whoſe right-hand was withered.

The Phariſees, who obſerved the compaſſionate Jeſus advance towards the man, did not doubt but he would attempt to heal him; and therefore, watched him attentively, that they might have ſomething to accuſe him with to the people. Their hypocriſy was arrived to that monſtrous pitch, that they determined to blaſt his reputation, by repreſenting him as a ſabbath-breaker, if he dared to heal the man, while they themſelves were prophaning it by an action, which would have polluted any day, namely, of ſeeking an opportunity of deſtroying a perſon who had never injured them, but done many good actions for the ſons of Jacob, and was continually labouring for their eternal welfare.

But theſe malicious intentions could not eſcape the knowledge of the Son of God. He knew their deſigns, and defied their impotent power, by performing the benevo-

lent action he deſigned, though he well knew they would exert every art they were maſters of in order to put him to death.

Accordingly, when our Saviour ordered the man to ſhew himſelf to the whole congregation, in order to excite their pity, theſe hypocritical teachers declared, in the ſtrongeſt terms, the unlawfulneſs of his performing even ſuch beneficent actions on the ſabbath; *Is it lawful to heal on the ſabbath-day?* They did not, however, aſk this queſtion with an intention to hinder him from performing the miracle. No, they had a very different intention, that of accuſing him. For they hoped he would have declared openly that ſuch actions were lawful; or, at leaſt, make no reply to their demand, which they would have conſtrued into an acknowledgment of what they aſſerted.

But the Son of God, who well knew their wicked intentions, did not fail to expoſe their malice and ſuperſtition; and accordingly aſked them, *Is it lawful on the ſabbath-day to do good, or to do evil? to ſave life or to deſtroy it?* Luke vi. 9. Is it not more lawful for me, on the ſabbath-days, to ſave men's lives, than for you to ſeek my death without the leaſt provocation? This was a ſevere rebuke, would admit of no anſwer; an therefore, they *held their peace*, pretending not to underſtand his meaning. He therefore, made uſe of an argument, which ſtupidity itſelf could not fail of underſtanding, and which all the art of theſe hypocritical ſophiſts was unable to anſwer. *What man*, ſays the bleſſed Jeſus, *ſhall there be among you, that ſhall have one ſheep, and if it fall into a pit on the ſabbath-day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? how much then is a man better than a ſheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the ſabbath-days*, Matt. xii. 11, 12.

The former queſtion they pretended not to underſtand, and therefore held their peace; but this argument effectually ſilenced them, tho' they were determined not to be convinced. This unconquerable obſtinacy grieved the ſpirit of the meek, the benevolent Jeſus, who beheld them *with anger*, that if poſſible, an impreſſion might be made, either on them or the ſpectators.

But at the ſame time that he teſtified his diſpleaſure towards the Phariſees, he uttered words of comfort to the lame man, bidding him ſtretch forth his hand; and he no ſooner obeyed the divine command, than *his hand was reſtored whole as the other*.

This aſtoniſhing work, performed in the midſt of a congregation, many of whom doubtleſs knew the man while he laboured under this infirmity, and in preſence of his moſt inveterate enemies, muſt certainly have had a great effect on the minds of the people, eſpecially as they ſaw that it had effectually ſilenced the Phariſees, who had nothing to offer, either againſt the miracle itſelf, or the reaſonings and power of him who had performed it.

But though theſe whited ſepulchres, as our bleſſed Saviour juſtly termed them, were ſilenced by his arguments, and aſtoniſhed at his miracles, yet they were ſo far from abandoning their malicious intentions, that they joined their inveterate enemies

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the Herodians, or Sadducees, in order to conſult how they might deſtroy him; well knowing that if he continued his preaching and working miracles, the people would wholly follow him, and their own power ſoon become contemptible. Jeſus, however, thought proper to prevent their malicious deſigns, by retiring into Galilee, to the borders of the lake of Chinnereth.

This retreat could not, however, conceal him from the multitude, who flocked to him from all quarters, bringing with them ſick and maimed, who were all healed and ſent away in peace. Some of his diſciples however, who ſtill entertained the popular opinion, that the Meſſiah would eſtabliſh his kingdom by force, and bear down all oppoſition, were extremely mortified to find their maſter retreat from ſo weak an enemy. But had they read with attention the prophecy of Iſaiah, they would have known that this weakneſs was one part of the Meſſiah's character. *Behold my ſervant whom I have choſen, my beloved in whom my ſoul is well pleaſed: I will put my ſpirit upon him, and he ſhall ſhew judgment to the Gentiles. He ſhall not ſtrive, nor cry, neither ſhall any man hear his voice in the ſtreets. A bruiſed reed ſhall he not break, and ſmoaking flax ſhall he not quench, till he ſend forth judgment unto victory. And in his name ſhall the Gentiles truſt.* Matt. xii. 15, &c.

There is ſeveral ſmall variations between this prophecy as quoted by St. Matthew, and the original in the book of Iſaiah; but the ſenſe in both places is the ſame. And I cannot help obſerving, that there is in this prophecy an evident contraſt between the publication of the Jewiſh religion by Moſes, and that of the Chriſtian by Chriſt. The doctrine of ſalvation taught by Moſes extended only to the ſingle nation of the Jews; whereas that publiſhed by the Meſſiah to every nation and people under heaven. Accordingly, our bleſſed Saviour, by retiring into Galilee, fulfilled the firſt part of this famous prophecy, *He ſhall ſhew judgment to the Gentiles*; for the Evangeliſt tells us great multitudes came to him from beyond Jordan, and from Syria, about Tyre and Sidon, *Mark* iii. 8.

Being now returned into Galilee, there was brought to him a blind and dumb man poſſeſſed with a devil; but Jeſus, with a ſingle word, caſt out the evil ſpirit, and reſtored the noble faculties of ſight and ſpeech. A miracle ſo ſurprizing could not fail of aſtoniſhing the numerous ſpectators, who now ſeemed convinced that the perſon endued with ſuch remarkable power, could be no other than the Meſſiah, *the ſon of David.*

But the Phariſees who were come thither from Jeruſalem, filled with malice at ſeeing him perform ſo many miracles, impudently affirmed, contrary to the conviction of their own minds, that they were wrought by the power of Beelzebub the prince of the devils. An affirmation, ſo remarkably wicked could not be ſuppoſed to ecape a cenſure from the Son of God, who addreſſing himſelf both to them and the people, demonſtrat-

ed the abſurdity of the calumny by an argument drawn from the common affairs of life. *Every kingdom*, ſaid the bleſſed Jeſus, *divided againſt itſelf, is brought to deſolation: and every city or houſe divided againſt itſelf, ſhall not ſtand. And if Satan caſt out Satan, he is divided againſt himſelf, how then ſhall his kingdom ſtand?* Your calumny is malicious and abſurd; it is is malicious, becauſe your own conſciences are convinced of its falſhood: and it is abſurd, becauſe Satan cannot aſſiſt me in preaching the kingdom of God, and deſtroying all the works of darkneſs, unleſs he be divided againſt himſelf, and attempt the deſtruction of his own kingdom. Adding, *And if I by Beelzebub caſt out devils, by whom do your children caſt them out? therefore they ſhall be your judges. But if I caſt out devils by the ſpirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.* Ye did not impute the miracles of your prophets to Beelzebub, but received them, on the evidence of theſe miracles, as the meſſengers of God. But ye reject me, who work greater and more numerous miracles than they, and impute them to the power of evil ſpirits. Is this conduct reconcilable? Theſe prophets, therefore, ſhall be your judges, they ſhall condemn you. But as it is true, that I caſt out devils by the aſſiſtance of the Almighty, it follows that the kingdom of God, ſo long-expected, is going to be eſtabliſhed.

But this blaſphemy, however great, may be forgiven you, becauſe ſtronger and more evident proofs of my miſſion may convince you of your ſins, and induce you to embrace the offers of eternal life. And the time is coming when the ſon of man ſhall be raiſed from the dead by the power of the Holy Ghoſt, the gifts of miracles ſhowered on almoſt all believers, and the nature of the Meſſiah's kingdom more fully explained, in order to remove the foundation of your prejudice, the expectation of a temporal prince. But if you then ſhut your eyes, and ſpeak evil againſt the Holy Ghoſt, by affirming that his gifts and miracles proceed from the prince of darkneſs, it ſhall never be forgiven you; becauſe it is a ſin you cannot poſſibly repent of, as no greater means of conviction will be offered; but you ſhall be puniſhed for it, both in this world, and in that which is to come. *Wherefore I ſay unto you, All manner of ſin and blaſphemy ſhall be forgiven unto men: but the blaſphemy againſt the Holy Ghoſt ſhall not be forgiven unto men. And whoſoever ſpeaketh a word againſt the ſon of man, it ſhall be forgiven him: but whoſoever ſpeaketh againſt the Holy Ghoſt, it ſhall not be forgiven him neither in this world, neither in the world to come*, Matt. xii. 31, 32.

This ſolemn ſentence on the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt, was probably now pronounced by our Saviour to awaken the conſciences of the Phariſees by a ſenſe of their danger, if they continued in ſuch deteſtible calumnies, when their own hearts ſufficiently told them that they flowed intirely from malice and reſentment.

But all his reaſonings and threatnings had no effect on this perverſe ſet of mortals, who ſarcaſtically anſwered,

ſwered, *Maſter, we would ſee a ſign from thee.* Strange ſtupidity! had not he the moment before caſt out a devil, and reſtored the faculties of ſight and ſpeech to the blind and dumb; cleanſed leapers, raiſed the dead, and even rebuked the tempeſtuous winds and waves? Were not theſe ſigns ſufficient to convince the moſt bigotted mortal? What therefore could theſe ſtubborn doctors of the law require? Well might the great Saviour of the world call them *a wicked and adulterous generation*; for ſurely they could boaſt of no part of the faith and piety of Abraham their great progenitor. Perſons of ſuch incorrigible inclinations certainly merited no indulgence; and accordingly, Jeſus told them they ſhould have no other ſign given them, but what they every day beheld, the ſign of the prophet Jonas, who by lying three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, was a type of the Son of God, who ſhould continue three days and three nights in the chambers of the tomb. Adding, that the Ninevites repented at the preaching of the prophet Jonas; and the queen of the South undertook a long journey to Jeruſalem to hear the wiſdom of Solomon; but they refuſed to attend to the doctrines of an infinitely greater prophet than Jonas, or liſten to one much wiſer than Solomon. Concluding his diſcourſe with a very appoſite parable, tending to ſhew the great danger of reſiſting conviction, and breaking through reſolutions, as ſuch actions tended entirely to render men more obdurate and abandoned than before.

During this diſpute with the Phariſees, Jeſus was informed that his mother and brethren or kinſmen, were without, deſiring to ſpeak to him: upon which the bleſſed Jeſus ſtretched out his hands towards his diſciples, and ſaid, *Behold my mother and my brethren. For whoſoever ſhall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the ſame is my brother, and ſiſter, and mother.* Matt. xii. 49, 50. A ſaying that ought to be written with the point of a diamond on the heart of every chriſtian, as it teaches us, that by practiſing the precepts of the goſpel, we ſhall contract a cloſer union with Chriſt, than the greateſt ties of conſanguinity are able to effect.

CHAP. XIII.

The parable of the ſower, with its explanation. The parable of the lighted lamp. The parable of the tares in the field. The parable of the ſeed that ſprung up imperceptibly. The parable of the grain of muſtard-ſeed. The parable of the leaven. Our Saviour's mother viſits him a ſecond time. The explanation of the parable of the tares. The parables of the treaſure and pearl. The parables of the net and the ſcribe. Our bleſſed Saviour retires to Nazareth. And ſends out the twelve apoſtles to preach, who return after the death of John the Baptiſt.

THE miracle Jeſus had wrought, and his ſtrong diſpute with the Phariſees, brought together ſo great a multitude, that he repaired to the ſea-

ſea-ſide; and for the better inſtructing the people, *he entered into a ſhip, and the whole multitude ſtood on the ſhore.* Being thus conveniently ſeated, he delivered many precepts of the utmoſt importance, beginning with the parable of the ſower, who caſt his ſeed on different kinds of ſoil, the products of which were anſwerable to the nature of the ground, ſome yielding a large increaſe, others nothing at all. By this elegant ſimilitude, the bleſſed Jeſus repreſented the different kinds of hearers, and the different manner in which they are affected by the precepts of religion. Some wholly ſuppreſs the doctrines delivered; in others they produce the fruits of righteouſneſs, in proportion to the goodneſs of their hearts. And ſurely a more proper parable could not have been delivered, when ſuch multitudes came to hear his diſcourſes, and ſo few practiſed the precepts, or profited by the heavenly doctrines they contained.

It may not be amiſs here to obſerve, that parables were very familiar to the oriental nations, particularly thoſe of Paleſtine, as we learn from the concurrent teſtimony of all the eaſtern writers: and it was the general method, both of the old prophets, John the Baptiſt, and our bleſſed Saviour himſelf, to allude to things preſent, and ſuch as immediately offered themſelves. Our Saviour alſo, by uſing this manner of teaching, fulfilled the prophecies concerning the Meſſiah, relating to his method of inſtruction, it being foretold, *That he ſhould open his mouth in parables; and utter things which have been kept ſecret from the foundation of the world.* It is therefore no wonder that the myſteries and ſecrets of the kingdom of heaven are generally the ſubjects of our Saviour's parables; his grand and fundamental doctrines being delivered in clear, plain, and expreſs terms, but ſometimes heightened and enlivened by the addition of beautiful parables. Similitudes of this kind are indeed the moſt ſimple method of teaching, and beſt accommodated to the apprehenſion of the vulgar and unlearned, and very eaſy to be remembered, underſtood, and applied. At the ſame time, they are the fineſt veil for myſteries, and the beſt means of convicting the proud and obſtinate, as well as concealing from him theſe truths, which his perverſeneſs and infidelity rendered him unworthy of having more clearly diſplayed.

But to return. The parable being finiſhed, his diſciples asked, why he taught the people in parables? To which he anſwered, *Becauſe it is given unto you to know the myſteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whoſoever hath, to him ſhall be given, and he ſhall have in more abundance: but whoſoever hath not, from him ſhall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore ſpeak I unto them in parables; becauſe in ſeeing they ſee not: and in hearing they hear not, n ither do they underſtand,* Matt. xiii. 11, &c. As if he had ſaid, You, my beloved diſciples, who are of an humble, docile temper, and are willing to uſe means, and reſort to me for inſtruction, and the explanation of the truths I deliver: to you it ſhall be no diſadvantage, that they are cloathed

cloathed in parables. Beſides, my diſcourſes are plain and intelligible to all unprejudiced minds: truth will ſhine through the veil in which it is arrayed, and the ſhadow will guide you to the ſubſtance. But theſe proud, theſe ſelf-conceited Phariſees, who are ſo blinded by their own prejudices, that they will neither hear nor underſtand a thing plainly delivered; to them I preach in parables, and hide the great truths of the goſpel under ſuch metaphorical robes, as will for ever conceal them from perſons of their temper. They have therefore brought upon themſelves this blindneſs, that in ſeeing they ſee not, and this wilful deafneſs, that in hearing they hear not, neither do they underſtand.

The bleſſed Jeſus added, that there was no reaſon for their being ſurpriſed at what he had told them, as it had long before been predicted by the prophet Iſaiah, *By hearing, ye ſhall hear, and ſhall not underſtand: and ſeeing, ye ſhall ſee and ſhall not perceive. For this people's heart is waxed groſs, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they cloſed; leſt at any time they ſhould ſee with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and ſhould underſtand with their heart, and ſhould be converted, and I ſhould heal them*, Matt. xiii. 14, 15. There is ſome variation in the words, as quoted by the Evangeliſt, and thoſe found in Iſaiah; but the import of both is the ſame, and may be paraphraſed in the following manner: 'The ſons 'of Jacob ſhall indeed hear the doc-'trines of the Goſpel, but not under-'ſtand them; and ſee the miracles 'by which theſe doctrines are con-'firmed, without perceiving them 'to be wrought by the finger of 'God: not becauſe the evidences pro-'duced by the Meſſiah are inſuffici-'ent, but becauſe the corruption of 'their hearts will not ſuffer them to 'examine and weigh theſe evidences; 'for the ſins of this people have har-'dened their hearts; their pride and 'vanity have ſhut their ears, and 'their hypocriſy and bigotted adhe-'rence to traditions and forced in-'terpretations of the law and the 'prophets, have cloſed their eyes, 'leſt the brilliant rays of truth ſhould 'ſtrike their ſight with irreſiſtible 'force, and the powerful voice of 'divine wiſdom force their attention, 'and command their aſſent; being 'unwilling to be directed to the 'paths of righteouſneſs, which lead 'to the heavenly Canaan.'

Such are the reaſons given by our bleſſed Saviour, for his teaching the people by parables: and to enhance the great privilege his diſciples enjoyed, he added, that many patriarchs and prophets of old had earneſtly deſired to ſee and hear theſe things which they ſaw and heard, but were denied that favour; God having till then ſhewed them to his moſt eminent ſaints in ſhadows only, and as they lay brooding in the womb of futurity. *But bleſſed are your eyes, for they ſee, and your ears, for they hear. For verily I ſay unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have deſire to ſee theſe things which ye ſee, and have not ſeen them, and to hear thoſe things which ye hear, and have not heard them*, Matt. xiii. 16.

The

The bleſſed Jeſus having thus raiſed the attention of his diſciples, proceeded to explain to them the parable of the ſower. *The ſower*, ſaid he, *ſoweth the word.* The ſeed therefore implies the doctrines of true religion, and the various kinds of ſoil the various kinds of hearers. The ground by the highway-ſide, which is apt to be beaten by men's treading upon it, is an image of thoſe who have their hearts ſo hardened with impiety, that tho' they hear the goſpel preached, it makes no impreſſion on their callous hearts, becauſe they either hear it inattentively, or quickly forget the words of the preacher. And ſurely no ſimilitude could more ſtrongly repreſent this inſenſibility and inattention, than the beaten ground, bordering on the highway, into which the ſeed never entering, it is picked up by the fowls of the air, or trodden in pieces by the feet of paſſengers. *When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and underſtandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which is ſown in his heart: this is he which received the ſeed by the way-ſide*, Matt. xiii. 19. We muſt not ſuppoſe, that the devil has the power of robbing hearers of their knowledge, by any immediate act of his own, becauſe he is ſaid to catch away the word ſown in their hearts, but by the opportunities they give the deceiver of mankind for exerting his ſtrong temptations, and particularly thoſe which have a relation to their commerce with men; a circumſtance that could not eſcape the obſervation of St. Luke, who tells us, that the ſeed was trodden down; or deſtroyed from their own head-ſtrong luſts, which, like ſo many birds pinched with hunger, devour the ſeed implanted in their minds.

The rocky ground repreſents thoſe hearers who ſo far receive the word into their hearts, that it diſcovers itſelf by good reſolutions, which are perhaps accompanied with a partial reformation of ſome ſins, and the temporary practice of ſome virtues. But the word has not ſunk deep enough in their minds, to remain conſtantly there; its abode with them is only for a ſeaſon: and therefore, when perſecution ariſeth for the ſake of the Goſpel, and ſuch hearers are expoſed to tribulations of any kind, the blade which ſprung up quickly withers for want of being watered with the ſtreams of piety and virtue; like the vegetable productions of the earth, when deprived of the enlivening rains and dews of heaven, and a want of earth to contain this balmy fluid, when the rays of the ſun dart in full vigour upon them. *But he that received the ſeed into ſtony places, the ſame is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it: Yet hath he not root in himſelf, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or perſecution ariſeth becauſe of the word, bye and bye he is offended*, Matt. xiii. 20, 21.

The ground encumbered with thorns, which ſprung up with the ſeed, and choaked it, repreſents all thoſe who receive the word into hearts already filled with the cares of this world, which will, ſooner or later, deſtroy whatever good reſolutions are raiſed

raiſed by the word. The cares of the world are compared to thorns, not only becauſe of their pernicious efficacy in choaking the word, but becauſe they cannot be eradicated without great pain and difficulty. In the parable, the hearers of this denomination are diſtinguiſhed from thoſe who receive the ſeed on ſtony ground, not ſo much by the effect of the word upon their minds, as by the different natures of each; for in both the ſeed ſpread up, but brought forth no fruit. Thoſe repreſented by the ſtony ground, have no depth of ſoil; but thoſe by the thorny ground, choak it by the cares of the world, the deceitfulneſs of riches, and the love of pleaſures, which ſooner or later will ſtifle the impreſſions of the word; by which means they at laſt become as unfruitful as the former. But both are diſtinguiſhed from thoſe hearers repreſented by the ſeed ſown by the highway-ſide, that they receive the word, and, in ſome meaſure, obey its precepts. Whereas the firſt never receive the word at all, hearing without attention; or if they do attend, forget it immediately. *He alſo that received ſeed among the thorns, is he that heareth the word; and the care of the world and the deceitfulneſs of riches choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful,* Matt. xiii. 21.

But in oppoſition to theſe unprofitable hearers of the word, others are repreſented, whoſe goodneſs of heart, repreſented under the ſimilitude of the ſoil, receive the word with gladneſs, and bring forth larger increaſe. Theſe are convinced of the truths delivered, and practiſe it, tho' contrary to their prejudices, and oppoſite to their inclinations. All thoſe bring forth, ſome an hundredfold, ſome ſixty, and ſome thirty, in proportion to their different degrees of ſtrength, in which they poſſeſs the graces neceſſary to the profitable hearing the word of righteouſneſs.

Having ended this interpretation of the parable of the ſower, he continued his diſcourſe to his diſciples, explaining to them, by the ſimilitude of a lighted lamp, the uſe they were expected to make of all the excellent inſtructions they had and ſhould receive from him. Their underſtanding, he told them, was to illuminate the world, as a brilliant lamp, placed in the centre of an apartment, enlightens the whole. He added, that tho' ſome of the doctrines of the goſpel were then concealed from the people, becauſe of their prejudices, yet the time would come when theſe doctrines ſhould be preached openly and plainly thro' the world; and therefore it was their duty, whom God had given both an opportunity of hearing and a capacity of underſtanding theſe doctrines, to liſten with the utmoſt attention. *Is a candle brought to be put under a buſhel, or under a bed, and not to be ſet on a candleſtick? For there is nothing hid which ſhall not be manifeſted; neither was any thing kept ſecret, but that it ſhould come abroad. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear,* Mark iv. 21, 22, 23.

But as it was a matter of great importance, that the diſciples, who were to publiſh the Goſpel through-

out the whole world, ſhould liſten with the cloſeſt attention to his ſermons, he repeated his admonition, adding, that their preſent privileges and future rewards ſhould be both proportioned to the fidelity and care with which they diſcharged the important truſt committed to them. *Take heed what ye hear; with what meaſure you mete, it ſhall be meaſured to you: and unto you that hear ſhall more be given*, Mark iv. 24.

After delivering theſe diſcourſes to his diſciples, he turned himſelf to the multitude on the ſhore, and in his uſual endearing accent, delivered the parable of the enemy's ſowing tares among the wheat; and on their firſt appearance aſtoniſhing the huſbandman's ſervants, who knew the field had been ſowed with good ſeed; and, in order to free the wheat from ſuch injurious plants, propoſed to root them up. But this the huſbandman abſolutely refuſed, leſt by extirpating the one they injured the other; adding, that he would take care, at the time of harveſt, to give orders to his reapers, that they firſt gathered the tares into bundles, and burn them, and afterwards to carry the wheat to his granaries. *The kingdom of heaven*, ſaid the bleſſed Jeſus, *is likened to a man, which ſowed good ſeed in his field: But while men ſlept, his enemy came and ſowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was ſprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares alſo. So the ſervants of the houſholder came, and ſaid unto him, Sir, didſt not thou ſow good ſeed in thy field? From whence then hath it tares? He ſaith unto them, an enemy hath done this. The ſervants ſaid unto him, wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he ſaid nay; leſt while ye gather up the tares, ye root up alſo the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harveſt: and in the time of harveſt I will ſay unto the reapers, gather ye the tares, and bind them in bundles, to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn*, Matt. xiii. 24, &c.

Having recited this parable of the tares, he ſpake another concerning the ſeed which ſprang up ſecretly, repreſenting the gradual and ſilent progreſs of the Goſpel among the ſons of men. He informed them, under this ſimilitude, that the huſbandman does not by any efficacy of his own cauſe the ſeed he caſts into the ground to grow, but leaves it to be nouriſhed by the teeming virtues of the ſoil, and the enlivening rays of the ſun: in the ſame manner Jeſus and his apoſtles, having taught men the doctrine of true religion, were not by any miraculous force to conſtrain the wills, far leſs by the terrors of fire and ſword to interpoſe viſibly in the aſſiſtance of it; but ſuffer it to ſpread by the ſecret influences of the holy ſpirit, till it attained its full effect. And as the huſbandman cannot, by the moſt diligent obſervation, perceive the corn in his field extending its dimenſions as it grows; ſo the miniſters of Chriſt were not, at the firſt planting of the Goſpel, to expect to ſee it make a quick progreſs thro' the world. The miniſters of religion muſt not, however, from hence imagine, that religion will flouriſh with-

without their carefully and importunately preſſing its precepts upon the minds of their hearers. The parable was ſpoke to inform the Jews in particular, that neither the Meſſiah nor his ſervants would employ force to eſtabliſh the kingdom of God, as they vainly expected the Meſſiah would have done; and to prevent the diſciples from fainting, when they ſaw that an immediate and rapid ſucceſs did not attend their labours. *So is the kingdom of God, as if a man ſhould caſt ſeed into the ground, and ſhould ſleep, and riſe night and day, and the ſeed ſhould ſpring and grow up he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of itſelf, firſt the blade, then the ear, and afterwards the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the ſickle, becauſe the harveſt is come,* Mark iv. 26, &c.

The next parable he ſpake to the multitude was, that of the muſtard-ſeed, which though very ſmall when ſown, becomes in Paleſtine and other parts of the Eaſt, a large ſpreading-tree. Intimating to his audience, under this ſimilitude, that notwithſtanding the Goſpel would at firſt appear contemptible from the ignominy flowing from the crucifixion of its author, the difficulty of its precepts, the weakneſs of the perſons by whom it was preached, and the ſmall number and mean condition of thoſe who received it; yet being founded on truth itſelf, it would increaſe to an aſtoniſhing magnitude, filling the whole earth, and affording ſpiritual nouriſhment to perſons of all nations, who ſhould enjoy all the privileges of the Meſſiah's kingdom equally with the Jews. And ſurely, a more proper parable could not have been uttered, to encourage his diſciples to perſevere in the work of the miniſtry, notwithſtanding it would in the beginning be oppoſed by the learned, the rich, and the powerful. *The kingdom of heaven is like unto a grain of muſtard-ſeed, which a man took and ſowed in his field. Which indeed is the leaſt of all ſeeds: but when it is grown it is the greateſt among herbs, and becometh a tree: ſo that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof,* Matt. xiii. 31, 32.

Having delivered theſe parables, our bleſſed Saviour concluded his diſcourſe with the parable of the leaven, to intimate the influence of the doctrine of the Goſpel on the minds of particular perſons: *The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three meaſures of meal, till the whole was leavened,* Matt. xiii. 33.

While Jeſus was thus delivering the words of eternal life to the multitude, his mother and brethren came a ſecond time, deſiring to ſee him. In all probability they feared that the continual fatigue of preaching would injure his health; and were therefore deſirous of taking him with them, that he might refreſh himſelf. But the bleſſed Jeſus, who was never weary of doing good, anſwered his indulgent parent as before, *My mother and my brethren are thoſe which hear the word of God and do it,* Luke viii. 19.

The evening now drawing on, Jeſus diſmiſſed the multitude, and returned to the houſe in Capernaum where he abode, and there explained to his diſciples the parable of the tares in the field. The huſbandman, our bleſſed Saviour, is the Son of man. The field, the Chriſtian church, planted in different parts of the world. The wheat are thoſe Chriſtians who obey the precepts of the Goſpel, and are ſupported by the influences of the holy ſpirit; and the tares, the bad Chriſtians, ſeduced into the paths of vice by the temptations of the devil. Our bleſſed Lord, therefore, by this parable, repreſented the mixed nature of the church on earth, the diſmal end of the hypocrites, and thoſe who forget God; for thoſe may deceive for a time, by aſſuming the robes of virtue and religion; yet they will not fail, ſooner or later, to betray themſelves, and ſhew that they are only wolves in ſheeps cloathing. At the ſame time, however ſincerely we may wiſh to ſee the church freed from her corrupted members, we muſt not extirpate them by force, leſt, being deceived by outward appearances, we alſo deſtroy the wheat or ſound members. We muſt leave this diſtinction to the awful day, when the great Meſſiah will deſcend to judgment; for then a final ſeparation will be made, the wicked caſt into torments that will never have an end, but the righteous received into life eternal, where they *ſhall ſhine forth as the ſun in the kingdom of their father*, Matt. xiii. 43.

Jeſus alſo, on this occaſion, delivered the parables of the treaſure hid in the field, and of the pearl of great price. The former was deſigned to teach us, that ſome meet with the Goſpel as it were by accident, and without ſeeking after it, agreeable to the prediction of the prophet, *That God is found of them that ſeek him not*, Iſaiah lxv. 1. But with regard to the latter, it was intended to intimate, that men ſometimes take the utmoſt pains, to became acquainted with the great truths of the Goſpel. And ſurely the ſimilitudes both of the treaſure and pearl, are very naturally uſed to ſignify the Goſpel; the former, as it enriches all who poſſeſs it; and the latter, becauſe it is more precious than rubies.

But that the diſciples muſt expect that the Chriſtian church would conſiſt of a mixed multitude of people, the good blended with the bad in ſuch a manner, that it would be difficult to ſeparate them, he compared it to a net caſt into the ſea, which gathered fiſh of every kind, good and bad, which were ſeparated when the net was drawn to land; that is, at the laſt great day of accounts, when the righteous will be conveyed to life eternal, and the wicked caſt into everlaſting miſery.

Our bleſſed Saviour, having finiſhed theſe parables, asked his diſciples, if they underſtood them? And upon their anſwering in the affirmative, he added, that every teacher of the Goſpel ought to reſemble a perſon whoſe houſe was completely furniſhed, and brought *forth out of his treaſures things new and old*, Matt. xiii. 52.

Not

Not long after Jeſus left Capernaum, and repaired to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and preached in the ſynagogue the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. But his townſmen, though aſtoniſhed at his doctrine, could not overcome the prejudices they had conceived againſt him, on account of the meanneſs of his family, and thence refuſed to own him for the Meſſiah. Our Saviour finding them the ſame incorrigible perſons as when he viſited them before, departed from them, and taught in the neighbouring villages. They, in common with all the Jews, were ſtrangers to the true characters of the Meſſiah, whom they conſidered as a temporal prince; and therefore could not bear that a perſon ſo mean as Jeſus appeared to be, ſhould perform works peculiar to that idol of their vanity, a glorious triumphant, ſecular Meſſiah.

During our Saviour's ſtay in the neighbourhood of Nazareth, he ſent out his diſciples to preach in different parts of Galilee, and to proclaim the glad tidings that God was then going to eſtabliſh the kingdom of the Meſſiah, wherein he would be worſhipped in ſpirit and in truth. And in order that they might confirm the doctrines they delivered, and prove that they had received their commiſſion from the Son of God, they were endowed with the power of working miracles. How long they continued their preaching cannot be known, but it is reaſonable to think they ſpent a conſiderable time in it, preaching in ſeveral parts of Judea.

The aſtoniſhing works performed by the apoſtles, raiſed the expectations of men higher than ever: the people were aſtoniſhed to ſee the diſciples of Jeſus perform ſo many miracles; and then concluded, that our Saviour muſt be greater than any of the old prophets, who could not tranſmit the power they enjoyed to any other. This extraordinary circumſtance could not fail of ſpreading his fame through the whole country; it even reached the ears of Herod Antipos, who fearing a perſon of ſuch extraordinary abilities, was very uneaſy; which ſome of his courtiers obſerving, endeavoured to remove by telling him, that one of the old prophets was riſen from the dead; but this did not ſatisfy him, and he declared that he believed it was John the Baptiſt riſen from the dead. *And he ſaid unto his ſervants, this is John the Baptiſt; he is riſen from the dead; and therefore, mighty works do ſhew forth themſelves in him*, Matt. xiv. 2.

The Evangeliſts having, on this account, mentioned John the Baptiſt, inform us that Herod had put him to death; but when this happened is uncertain.

I have already obſerved, that Herod had caſt John into priſon for his boldneſs, in reproving him for the adulterous commerce in which he lived with his brother's wife. The ſacred writers have not told us how long he continued in priſon; but it is plain from his two diſciples, who came from him to our Saviour, that his followers did not forſake him in his melancholy condition. Nay,

Herod himſelf both reſpected and feared him, knowing that he was highly and deſervedly beloved by the people; he conſulted him often, and in many things, followed his advice. But Herodias, his brother's wife, with whom he lived in ſo ſhameful a manner, being continually uneaſy, leſt Herod ſhould be prevailed upon to ſet him at liberty, ſought all opportunities to deſtroy him; and at laſt an incident happened, which enabled her to compaſs her intentions.

Herod having, on his birth-day, made a great feaſt for his friends, ſhe ſent her daughter Salome, whom ſhe had by Philip her lawful huſband, into the ſaloon, to dance before the king and his gueſts. Her performance was, it ſeems, remarkably elegant, and ſo charmed Herod, that he promiſed with an oath to give her whatever ſhe aſked.

Having obtained ſo remarkable a promiſe, ſhe ran to her mother, deſiring to know what ſhe ſhould aſk; and was inſtructed by that wicked woman, to require the head of John the Baptiſt. An indication of this kind, doubtleſs ſurprized Salome, as ſhe could not poſſibly ſee the uſe of asking what could be of no uſe to her. But Herodias would take no denial, peremptorily inſiſting on her demanding the head of the Baptiſt. Accordingly ſhe returned to Herod, ſaying, *I will that thou give me bye and bye, in a charger, the head of John the Baptiſt.*

A ſudden horror ſeized every breaſt at ſo unexpected a demand; the gaiety of the king was vaniſhed; he was vexed and confounded. But being unwilling to appear either raſh, fickle, or falſe, before a company of the firſt perſons of his kingdom for rank and character, he commanded the head to be given her: not one of the gueſts having the courage to ſpeak a ſingle word in behalf of an innocent man, nor attempt to divert him from his mad purpoſe, though he gave them an opportunity of doing it, by ſignifying to them that he performed his oath merely out of regard to the company. Thus Herod, through a miſplaced regard to his oath, and his gueſts, committed a moſt unjuſt and cruel action; an action that will for ever brand his memory with diſhonour, and render his very name deteſtible to the lateſt poſterity.

Soon after the command was given, the head of that venerable prophet, whoſe rebukes had ſtruck Herod with awe in his looſeſt moments, and whoſe exhortations had often excited him to virtuous actions, was brought pale and bloody, in a charger, and given to the daughter of Herodias, in the preſence of all the gueſts.

The young lady eagerly received the bloody preſent, and carried it to her mother, who enjoyed the whole pleaſure of revenge, and feaſted her eyes with the ſight of her enemy's head, now ſilent and harmleſs. But ſhe could not ſilence the voice of the Baptiſt; it became louder, filling the earth and heavens, and publiſhing to every people and nation this woman's baſeneſs and adultery.

Thus fell that great and good man John the Baptiſt, who was proclaimed

claimed by our bleſſed Saviour himſelf to be *more than a prophet*. Joſephus tells us, that his whole crime conſiſted in exhorting the Jews to the love and practice of virtue; and in the firſt place to piety, juſtice, and regeneration, or newneſs of life; not by the bare abſtinence from this or that particular ſin, but by an habitual purity of mind and body.

I cannot conclude this affecting cataſtrophe of the Baptiſt, without obſerving, that the hiſtory of this birth-day tranſmitted to poſterity in the ſcriptures, ſtands a perpetual beacon to warn the great, the gay, and the young, to beware of diſſolute mirth. Admoniſhed by ſo fatal an example, they ſhould be careful to maintain, in the midſt of their jollity, an habitual recollection of ſpirit, leſt reaſon at any time, enervated by the pleaſures of ſenſe, ſhould ſlacken the rein of wiſdom, or let it drop, though only for a moment, becauſe their headſtrong paſſions, ever impatient of controul, may catch the opportunity, and ruſh with them into follies, whoſe conſequences will be unſpeakably, perhaps eternally bitter.

CHAP. XIV.

The multitude fed by miracle in the wilderneſs of Bethſaida. The people propoſe to make Jeſus a king. Peter walketh on the ſea. The diſcourſe in the ſynagogue of Capernaum, occaſioned by the miracle of feeding the people in the Deſert.

THE death of John the Baptiſt ſo greatly affected the diſciples, that they returned from their miſſion, and aſſiſted in performing the laſt offices to the body of their old maſter, many of the apoſtles having been originally diſciples of John. As ſoon as theſe pious rites were over, they repaired to Jeſus, and told him all that had happened.

On hearing this melancholy news our bleſſed Saviour retired with them by ſea into a deſert place belonging to Bethſaida, that by retirement meditation, nd prayer, they might be refreſhed and recruited for their ſpiritual labours; and, at the ſame time, leave an example to us, that we ſhould often retire from the noiſe and hurry of the world, and offer up the moſt fervent prayers to our heavenly father.

But the multitude attended ſo cloſely, that their departure was not long concealed; and great numbers of people repaired to the place where they ſuppoſed Jeſus and his diſciples had ſecluded themſelves. Struck with the greatneſs of his miracles on thoſe that were ſick, and anxious to hear more inſtructions from the mouth of ſo divine a teacher, no difficulties were too great for them to ſurmount, no place too retired for them to penetrate, in ſearch of their admired preacher.

Nor did the pains they had taken in following their holy guide eſcape the notice of the benevolent Jeſus. He ſaw them, he was *moved with compaſſion* towards them, becauſe they were as ſheep not having a ſhepherd, multitudes of people without a paſtor, a large harveſt without labourers; motives abundantly ſufficient to excite compaſſion in the Son of God.

It was melancholy to think that theſe numerous throngs of people were ſcattered abroad, without a guide, without a guardian; a large flock of defenceleſs ſheep, without a ſingle ſhepherd to defend them from the jaws of the infernal wolf! No wonder therefore, that the bleſſed Jeſus, that *good ſhepherd who came to lay down his life for the ſheep*, was moved with pity towards them: the ſame pity which brought him from the courts of heaven for the ſake of his loſt and wandering ſheep in the deſert, now brought him to this multitude of people, whom he inſtructed in the doctrines of eternal life; and, with his uſual goodneſs, healed all the ſick among them.

Wholly intent on teaching and healing the people, our bleſſed Saviour did not perceive the day to wear away, and that the greateſt part of it was already ſpent: but his diſciples, too anxious about the things of this world, thought proper to adviſe him of it; as if the Son of God wanted any directions from man. The day, ſaid the diſciples, is now far advanced, and the place a ſolitary deſert, where neither food nor lodging can be procured: it would therefore be convenient to diſmiſs the people, that they may repair to the towns or villages on the borders of the Wilderneſs, and provide themſelves with food and lodging, for they have nothing to eat.

But the bleſſed Jeſus told them there was no neceſſity for ſending the people away to procure victuals for themſelves, as they might ſatisfy the hunger of the multitude, by giving them to eat. And at the ſame time to prove what opinion his diſciples entertained of his power, addreſſed himſelf to Philip, who was well acquainted with the country, and ſaid, *Whence ſhall we buy bread that theſe may eat?*

Philip, aſtoniſhed at the ſeeming impoſſibility of procuring a ſupply for ſo great a multitude, with the ſmall ſum of money which he knew was their all, and forgetting the extent of his maſter's power, anſwered, *Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not ſufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little*, John vi. 6.

Our bleſſed Saviour might now have put the ſame queſtion to Philip that he did on another occaſion, *Have I been ſo long time with you, and haſt thou not known me, Philip?* John xiv. 9. Haſt thou beheld ſo many miracles, and art ſtill ignorant that I can ſupply food not only for this people, but for all the ſons of men, and for *the cattle upon a thouſand hills?*

But he contented himſelf with anſwering, *Give ye them to eat.* The twelve, not yet comprehending the deſign of their maſter, repeat the objection of Philip, but add, that they were willing to expend their whole ſtock, in order to procure as large a ſupply as poſſible. *Shall we go*, ſay they, *and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, that they may eat?*

But this was far from the intention of their great maſter, who, inſtead of making a direct anſwer to their queſtion, aſked them, *How many loaves have ye?* How much proviſion can be found among this multitude? go and ſee.

The diſciples obey the command of their maſter; and Andrew ſoon returned to inform him, that the whole ſtock amounted to no more than five barley loves and two ſmall fiſhes; a quantity ſo inconſiderable, that it ſcarcely deſerved notice. *What are they*, ſaid this diſciple, *among ſo many?* What indeed would they have been among ſuch a multitude of people, if they had not been diſtributed by the creating hand of the Son of God!

Jeſus, however, ordered them to be brought to him; and immediately commanded the multitude to ſit down on the graſs, with which the place abounded, directing his diſciples at the ſame time to range them in a regular order by hundreds and fifties in a company, each company forming a long ſquare, containing a hundred in rank, and fifty in file, that the number might be more eaſily aſcertained, and the people the more regugarly ſerved.

His directions were accordingly obeyed: the people ſat down in the manner they were ordered, big with the expectation of what this uncommon preparation portended; while the great maſter of the banquet ſtood ready to ſupply the neceſſities of all his gueſts: a banquet where, tho' they had no canopy but the azure ſky, no table but the verdant turf, where their food was only coarſe barley bread and dried fiſhes, and their drink only water from a bubbling fountain, yet diſplayed more real grandeur by the preſence of the divine maſter of it, than the royal feaſt of gorgeous Ahaſuerus, or the ſplendid entertainment of the imperious Nebuchadnezzar.

The multitude being ſeated, Jeſus took the loaves and fiſhes into his hands, in the ſight of all the people, that they might be convinced of the ſmall quantity of proviſions that were then before them, and that they could only expect to be fed by his ſupernatural power. But that hand which has conſtantly ſuſtained nature could now eaſily multiply theſe five loaves and two fiſhes; for, as the Pſalmiſt elegantly obſerves, *He openeth his hand, and filleth all thing living with plenteouſneſs.* Accordingly he looked up to heaven, returned thanks to God the liberal giver of all good things, for his infinite beneficence in furniſhing food for all fleſh, and for the power he had conferred on him, of relieving mankind by his miracles, particularly for that he was about to work. This done, he bleſſed them, and ſo peculiarly efficacious was his bleſſing, that theſe five barley loaves and two fiſhes were multiplied into a quantity ſufficient to ſupply the wants of five thouſand men, beſides women and children, who, on the moſt favourable ſuppoſition, muſt amount to an equal number. *And Jeſus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he diſtributed to the diſciples, and the diſciples to them that were ſat down; and likewiſe of the fiſhes as much as they would*, John vi. 11.

Thus did the bleſſed Jeſus, who is the bread of life, feed at leaſt ten thouſand people with five barley loaves and two ſmall fiſhes, giving a magnificent proof both of his power and goodneſs. For after all had eaten to ſatiety, they took up twelve baſkets

kets full of the broken pieces of meat; a much larger quantity than was firſt ſet before our Lord to divide.

Aſtoniſhing fact! But what is too hard for God! what is impoſſible to Omnipotence! Strange perverſeneſs of the ſons of men, that after ſuch manifeſtations of Almighty power, they ſhould incredulouſly doubt, or impiouſly diſtruſt the providence, and fatherly care of this ſovereign, this infinitely gracious Being, into whoſe hands the father hath delivered this world and all its concerns! We are his by right of creation and redemption, and him we are bound to ſerve; and bleſſed are they who have ſo kind a maſter, ſo compaſſionate a father!

There are no difficulties attending the literal account of this miracle, as recorded by the ſeveral Evangeliſts: and I cannot help obſerving, that the circumſtances of the place and time, tended to magnify its greatneſs. The place was a deſert, where there was no poſſibility of procuring any ſuſtenance. Had he done this mighty work in any of the towns or villages round about, the Phariſees in thoſe days, and the infidels in ours, might have objected that he had received ſecretly ſome ſupplies: but this, in the preſent caſe, was impoſſible. The time was the evening; the people had been all the day faſting, and, conſequently, were ready for their meal: had it been done in the morning, they might have ſaid either that the people had been juſt refreſhed, or were not hungry: conſequently, the miracle not great. But the time and place wholly removed all objections of this kind, and proved beyond a poſſibility of doubt, That *God can furniſh a table in the Wilderneſs.*

But I cannot conclude this narrative without obſerving, that we ſhould learn from this mighty miracle to remember, That it is this divine Lord, this ſon of the Father, who every year bleſſes mankind with plentiful ſupplies of every thing neceſſary: it is this Lord, who, in the emphatical words of David, *viſiteth the earth and bleſſeth it, who maketh it very plenteous; who watereth her furrows, and ſendeth rain into the little vallies thereof, who maketh it ſoft with ſhowers, and bleſſeth the increaſe of it: who crowneth the year with his goodneſs, while his clouds drop fatneſs: making the valleys ſtand ſo thick with corn, that they laugh and ſing,* Pſalm lxv. 9, 10. Whoſe beneficent hand, and liberal bounty call for all their praiſe, and claim all their thankfulneſs. For, however inattentively we may behold this mighty work of Omnipotence. it is no leſs a miracle that our Lord ſhould every day ſupport and feed the whole race of mankind, and all the creatures of his hand, than that Chriſt ſhould feed five thouſand with five loaves and two fiſhes; for what proportion does five thouſand bear to thoſe myriads of men who are daily fed from the fruits of the earth; the increaſe of which is equally a miracle with the increaſe of the bread and loaves, by the bleſſing of Jeſus. How ſmall is the ſeed ſown when compared with the produce? It is carried out in handfuls and brought home in ſheaves;

ſheaves; and who can tell by what ſecret operations this wonderful effect is wrought? Nature is equally wonderful in all her works as in this particular: and the Divinity, to an attentive obſerver, equally viſible in theſe regular productions, as in miraculous ſupplies afforded; equally ſeen in the wine produced from the moiſture of the earth filtrated thro' the branches of the vine, as in that inſtantaneouſly made from water at the marriage in Cana: equally ſeen in the corn gradually ripened, and made into bread for the ſupport of all mankind, as in the bread miraculouſly bleſſed to the ſupport of the five thouſand. But the conſtant repetition of theſe ſurprizing operations renders them common, and being common, are leſs obſerved. Our heavenly father therefore condeſcends to deviate from the common order of things, to rouſe and awaken our attention. But if we are dead and utterly inattentive to the works of God in nature, where we ſee the divine magnificence and bounty ſo viſibly, ſo richly diſplayed, there is too much reaſon to fear, that outward miracles will not now awaken us. We are, however, apt to deceive ourſelves in this reſpect, and are frequently led to conclude, that had we been preſent at ſo ſtupendous a miracle as that we are contemplating, we ſhould have adored the divine hand that wrought it, and never have forſook the bleſſed Jeſus. But alas! if all the diſplays of his divine power in the works of creation; if all the evidences of his Omnipotence; if the continual ſupplies of his bounty, and the moſt legible characters of his adorable love, written upon all the creatures of his hand, will not elevate our grateful and rejoicing hearts to him, there is great reaſon to fear, that had we ſeen the bleſſed Jeſus feed five thouſand men with five barley loaves and two ſmall fiſhes; had we ourſelves been partakers of this miraculous banquet, we ſhould have acted like many who really enjoyed theſe privileges, and have turned away at ſome of his hard ſayings, *and walked no more with him.*

But to return from this digreſſion. The people, when they had ſeen the Saviour of the world perform ſo ſtupendous a miracle, were aſtoniſhed above meaſure; and in the height of their tranſport, propoſed to take Jeſus by force and make him a king, concluding, that he muſt then aſſume the title of the Meſſiah, whoſe coming they had ſo long earneſtly expected, and under whoſe reign they expected all kinds of temporal felicities.

But Jeſus well knowing the intentions of the multitude, and the inclinations of his diſciples to ſecond them, ordered the latter to repair immediately to their boat and ſail for Bethſaida, while he ſent away the former. They would it ſeems gladly have detained the people, with whom they fully agreed in ſentiment; and even lingered till he conſtrained them to get into the boat; ſo fully were they ſtill poſſeſſed, that their maſter was to take the reins of government, and become a powerful prince over the houſe of Jacob.

The

The people were not the leaſt unwilling to let the diſciples depart, as they ſaw that Jeſus did not go with them. Perhaps they imagined he was ſending them away to provide ſuch things as they had need of in the expedition. Nor did they refuſe to diſperſe when he commanded them, propoſing to return in the morning, as we find they actually did.

Jeſus having thus ſent the diſciples, and the multitude away, repaired himſelf to a ſummit of a mountain, ſpending the evening in heavenly contemplations, and ardent prayers to his Almighty Father.

But the diſciples meeting with a contrary wind, could not continue their courſe to Bethſaida, which lay about two leagues to the northward of the deſert mountain, where the multitudes were miraculouſly fed. They however did all in their power to land as near that city as poſſible, and were toſſed up and down all night by the tempeſt; ſo that, at the concluſion of the fourth watch, or five o'clock in the morning, they were not above a league from the ſhore.

Jeſus beheld from the mountain their great perplexity; but they were ignorant of the preſence of their maſter, though he was now coming to their relief. A particular that ſhould teach us, when the ſtormy billows of affliction aſſault, and ſeem ready to overwhelm us, not to deſpair of relief; for he beholds every particular of our diſtreſs, and hath not *forgotten to be gracious*; but will ſurely come to our relief, and work our deliverance in a manner altogether unexpected. He often calms the ſtorm of affliction that ſurrounds us, and commands the bellowing waves of diſtreſs to ſubſide. Human wiſdom indeed is often at a loſs; it can diſcover no hopes of deliverance, nor ſee any way to eſcape; but he can but eaſily effect the one, or point out the other.

This was the caſe of the diſciples: they were toſſed by boiſterous waves, and oppoſed in their courſe by the rapid current of the wind; ſo that all hopes of reaching the place intended were vaniſhed; when, behold their heavenly maſter, to aſſiſt them in this diſtreſsful ſituation, comes to them, walking on the foaming ſurface of the ſea.

But his approach filled them with aſtoniſhment; they took him for one of the apoſtate ſpirits, and ſhrieked for fear. Their terrors were however ſoon removed; their great and affectionate maſter talked to them, with the ſound of whoſe voice they were perfectly acquainted. *Be of good cheer*, ſaid the bleſſed Jeſus, *it is I, be not afraid.*

Peter, a man of a warm and forward temper, beholding Jeſus walking on the ſea was exceedingly amazed, and conceived the ſtrongeſt deſire of being enabled to perform ſo wonderful an action. Accordingly, without the leaſt reflection, he immediately begged that his maſter would bid him come to him on the water. He did not doubt but that Jeſus would gratify his requeſt, as it ſufficiently intimated, that he would readily undertake any thing, however

ever difficult, at the command of his Saviour. But it appeared, that the pinions of his faith were too weak to ſupport him to that height of obedience to which he would have willingly ſoared. And to convince this forward diſciple of the weakneſs of his faith, and render him more diffident of his own ſtrength, our bleſſed Saviour granted Peter his requeſt. He ordered him to come to him on the water.

Peter joyfully obeyed his divine maſter; he left the boat, and walked on the ſurface of the ſea. But the wind increaſing, made a dreadful noiſe, and the boiſterous waves at the ſame time threatened every moment to overturn him. His faith was ſtaggered, his preſence of mind forſook him, he forgot that his Saviour was at hand. And in proportion as his faith decreaſed the waters yielded and he ſunk. In this extremity he looked around for his maſter; and on the very brink of being ſwallowed up, cried, *Lord ſave me.* His cry was not diſregarded by his compaſſionate Saviour. *He ſtretched out his hand and caught him, and ſaid unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didſt thou doubt?* Matt. xiv. 31.

Peter was convinced before he left the ſhip, that it was Jeſus who was coming to them on the water; nor did he even doubt it when he was ſinking, becauſe he then implored his aſſiſtance. But when he found the ſtorm increaſe, and the billows rage more horribly than before, his fears ſuggeſted that either his maſter would be unable or unwilling to ſupport him amidſt the frightful blaſts of the tempeſt. His fears were therefore both unreaſonable and culpable: unreaſonable, becauſe the ſame power that had enabled him to walk on the ſurface of the deep, was abundantly ſufficient to ſupport him there, notwithſtanding all the horrors of the ſtorm: culpable, becauſe he conſidered his maſter as unable to preſerve him, or that he paid no regard to his promiſe; for Jeſus had virtually promiſed him his aſſiſtance, when he granted his petition. And hence we ſhould learn not to be preſumptuous and ſelf-ſufficient; not to ruſh on dangers, and fly in the face of oppoſition, unleſs there is a neceſſity for ſo doing. We ſhould never refuſe to undertake any action however difficult, when our religion is at ſtake; or, abandon the paths of virtue, from a fear of the reſentment of the children of this world: but we ſhould, at the ſame time, be careful not to go farther than neceſſity obliges us, leſt like Peter, we repent our own temerity.

This miracle aſtoniſhed the diſciples; for though they had ſo very lately ſeen the miracle of the five loaves, they do not ſeem to have before formed a proper idea of his power; but being now fully convinced, that he could be no other than the expected Meſſiah, they *came and worſhipped him, ſaying, of a truth, thou art the Son of God,* Matt. xiv. 33.

Our Saviour ſeems, on this occaſion, to have wrought another miracle; for the Evangeliſt tells us, that he

had no ſooner entered into the ſhip, and huſhed the horrors of the ſtorm, than they arrived at the place, whither they were going. *Then they willingly received him into the ſhip, and immediately the ſhip was at the land whither they went*, John vi. 21.

When Jeſus came out of the ſhip, the inhabitants of the neighbouring country ran to him, bringing with them all thoſe that were ſick; and they were all healed. It ſhould be remembered, that though Jeſus ordinarily reſided in the neighbourhood of Capernaum, yet he had been abſent ever ſince his viſiting Nazareth; and therefore it is natural to think, that the inhabitants, on his return, would not omit the opportunity of bringing their ſick in ſuch crowds, that it was impoſſible for Jeſus to beſtow particular attention on each of them; and this was the reaſon, for their beſeeching him, *that they might only touch the hem of his garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole*, Matt. xiv. 36.

Not that there was any virtue in his garments; for then the ſoldiers, who ſeized them at his crucifixion, might have wrought the ſame miracles, but becauſe Jeſus willed it to be ſo. It was now the acceptable time, the day of ſalvation, foretold by Iſaiah, and Chriſt's volition, was ſufficient to remove any diſtemper whatſoever.

I have already obſerved, that our bleſſed Saviour, after miraculouſly feeding the people, ordered them to diſperſe, and retire to their places of abode.

The former they complied with; but, inſtead of obeying the latter, they ſtayed in the neighbourhood of the deſert mountain; and obſerving that no boat had come thither, ſince the diſciples left their maſter, concluded that Jeſus ſtill continued in that place, and had no deſign of leaving his attendants. And hence they were perſuaded, that though Jeſus had modeſtly declined the honour of being made a king, he would accept it the next day; eſpecially as they might fancy his diſciples were diſpatched to the other ſide, with no other intention than to prepare every thing neceſſary for that purpoſe. Hopes like theſe animated them to continue in this ſolitary wilderneſs, and take up their lodgings in the caverns of the rocks and mountains, notwithſtanding their difficulties were greatly increaſed by the raging of the ſtorm.

But no ſooner had the roſy hand of the morning withdrawn the curtains of the eaſt, and tipt the mountains tops with rays of ſilver, then the multitude left their retreat, and ſearched for Jeſus in every part of the mountain, to the ſummit of which they had ſeen him retire. Finding their ſearch in vain, they concluded that he muſt have departed for the other ſide in ſome boat belonging to Tiberius, which had been forced by the ſtorm, to take ſhelter in a creek at the foot of the mountain. Accordingly, they repaired to Capernaum, where they found him in the ſynagogue teaching the people; and could not help aſking him with ſome ſurprize, *Rabbi, when cameſt thou hither?* John vi. 25.

To

To this queſtion, the bleſſed Jeſus anſwered, that they did not ſeek him, becauſe they were convinced, by his miracles, of the truth of his miſſion, but becauſe they hoped to be continually fed in the ſame miraculous manner as before. *Verily, verily, I ſay unto you, ye ſeek me, not becauſe ye ſaw the miracles, but becauſe ye did eat of the loaves and were filled.* Theſe are the views which induce ye to follow me; but ye are entirely miſtaken; for happineſs does not conſiſt in the meat that periſheth, nor is it that ſort of meat ye muſt expect to receive from the Meſſiah. Mere animal foods, which pleaſe and delight the body only, are not the gifts he came down from heaven to beſtow; it is the meat that endureth to everlaſting life, divine knowledge and grace, which, by invigorating all the faculties of the ſoul, makes it at once, incorruptible, and immortal: neither ought ye to follow the ſon of man with no other intention, than to obtain the meat that periſheth; but in hopes of being rewarded with the meat that endureth to everlaſting life: *Labour not for the meat which periſheth, but for that meat which endureth to everlaſting life, which the ſon of man will give unto you: for him hath God the Father ſealed,* John vi. 27.

The Jews, who were no ſtrangers to the metaphors of meat and drink, as they are frequently found in the writings of their own prophets to ſignify wiſdom and knowledge, might have eaſily underſtood what our bleſſed Saviour meant by the meat *enduring to everlaſting life.* They however intirely miſtook him; imagining that he ſpake of ſome delicious healthful animal food, which would render them immortal; and which was only to be procured under the government of their great Meſſiah. It is therefore no wonder that his exhortation ſhould ſo greatly affect them, that they aſked him, what they ſhould do to erect the Meſſiah's kingdom, and obtain that excellent meat, which, he ſaid, God had authoriſed him to give to his followers.

The minds of the Jews were filled with a notion of the great empire which was to be erected by the Meſſiah, and doubtleſs expected, that Jeſus would have bidden them firſt to riſe againſt the Romans, vindicate their own liberties, and then eſtabliſh in every country, by the terror of fire and ſword, the authority of that powerful prince, ſo long promiſed to the Jewiſh nation. To convince them therefore of their miſtake, and inform them what God really required of them, towards erecting the Meſſiah's kindom, Jeſus told them, that they ſhould believe on the perſon ſent to them from the God of Jacob; but this anſwer exceedingly offended them. They were perſuaded, that he could not be the Meſſiah promiſed in the law and the prophets, who took no care to erect a temporal kingdom. And ſome of them, more audacious than the reſt, had the confidence to tell him, that ſince he aſſumed the character of the Meſſiah, and required them to believe in him

as ſuch, notwithſtanding his character was entirely different from the great deliverer deſcribed in the ſacred writings, it was neceſſary, that he ſhould perform greater miracles, than either Moſes, or any of the old prophets, if he was deſirous of convincing them, that they ought to believe him, the long promiſed Meſſiah. *They ſaid therefore unto him, What ſign ſheweſt thou then, that we may ſee, and believe thee? What doſt thou work? Our fathers did eat manna in the deſert; as it is written, he gave then bread from heaven to eat*, John vi. 30.

By extolling the miracle of the manna, by calling it bread from heaven, and by inſinuating that this miracle was wrought by Moſes, the Jews endeavoured to depreciate both Chriſt's miſſion, and his miracle of the loaves. They conſidered his miracle, as a ſingle meal of terreſtrial food, at which not above nine or ten thouſand had been fed; whereas Moſes had ſupported the whole Jewiſh nation, during the ſpace of forty years in the wilderneſs, by celeſtial food. To this objection, the bleſſed Jeſus replied; *Verily, verily, I ſay unto you, Moſes gave you not that bread from heaven; but my father giveth you the true bread from heaven*, John vi. 32. Moſes did not give you the manna that fell around the camp in the Wilderneſs, nor did it deſcend from heaven; it was formed in the regions of the air, by the omnipotent hand of the God of Jacob. But by the miracle of the loaves, my heavenly Father hath typified the true, the ſpiritual, the heavenly bread, which he himſelf giveth to the ſons of men, and of which the manna was only a ſymbolical repreſentation: the food that ſuſtained the Iſraelites in the Wilderneſs was ſufficient only for a ſingle nation, but this for all the children of men.

Many of the Jews, who liſtened with pleaſure to his doctrine, and having heard him deſcribe the properties of the celeſtial bread, were animated with an earneſt deſire of being always fed with it. *Lord ever more give us this bread*, to which the bleſſed Jeſus anſwered. *I am the bread of life: He that cometh to me ſhall never hunger; and he that believeth on me ſhall never thirſt*, John vi. 34.

Having made this anſwer to thoſe who liſtened attentively to his doctrine, he turned himſelf to thoſe who heard him with prejudice, and took every advantage of wreſting his words. You aſk me, ſays he, to ſhew you a ſign, that ye may ſee and believe me to be the true Meſſiah. Surely you have ſeen it: you have ſeen my character and miſſion in the many miracles I have performed: miracles abundantly ſufficient to convince you that I am really the Meſſiah ſo often promiſed by the antient prophets, ſo long expected by the whole Jewiſh nation. But notwithſtanding all theſe proofs, your hearts are ſtill hardened; you expect a temporal prince, who ſhall raiſe the Jewiſh kingdom above all the empires of the earth; and becauſe I do not affect the authority and pomp of an earthly monarch, you

reject me as an impoſtor. Your infidelity, therefore, does not proceed from want of evidence, as you vainly pretend, but from the perverſeneſs of your own diſpoſition, which may perhaps in time be overcome; for all thoſe that the Father hath given me, however obſtinate they may be for a ſeaſon, will at laſt believe on the Son of God. Nor will I ever reject any that come to me, however low their circumſtances may be, however vile they may appear in their own eyes, or however great their violence againſt my doctrines may have been exerted. I came down from heaven not to act according to the common method of human paſſions, which excite men to return *evil for evil*, but to bear with them; to try all poſſible means to bring them to repentance; and lead them in the ſtrait paths of virtue, which terminate at the manſions of the heavenly Canaan.

It is the fixed determination of my Father, to beſtow eternal life on all who truly believe in me; and therefore I will raiſe them up at the laſt day.

As the greateſt part of the Jews were deſirous only of temporal privileges and advantages, it is no wonder that they were offended at this doctrine; eſpecially at his affirming, that he was the bread of life, and that he came down from heaven. Was not this man, ſaid they, born into the world, like other mortals? And are we not acquainted with his parents? How then can he pretend to come down from heaven?

But theſe degrading thoughts could not eſcape the cenſure of him, to whom nothing is a ſecret: you need not, ſaid the bleſſed Jeſus, object to my birth, and the meanneſs of my relations, nor conſider them as inconſiſtent with my heavenly extraction; for while you believe your teachers, who have ſo ſhamefully corrupted the oracles of omnipotence, and filled your minds with the vain expectations of a temporal kingdom, you cannot believe on me. No man can believe on the Son of God, unleſs he be perſuaded by the Father. You need not be ſurpriſed at this: for however ye may imagine, that all men, at the appearance of the Meſſiah, will flock to him with great cheerfulneſs, and become the willing ſubjects of his kingdom, without any extraordinary means of perſuaſion, the prophets plainly foretel the contrary; for they promiſe that men ſhall enjoy the teaching of the Father, in a far more eminent manner during the Meſſiah's kingdom, than under any preceding diſpenſation; conſequently perſuaſion, and the moſt earneſt perſuaſion too, is neceſſary. But you are not to underſtand, that by being taught of God, you are to ſee him perſonally: no man has enjoyed that privilege, but the Son, whom the Father has ſent into the world. The doctrine therefore, which I deliver, as it tends to eradicate the ſeeds of corruption, and cheriſh gracious diſpoſitions, which are the principles of eternal life, prove, that I am really that bread of life which I told you came down from heaven.

Having

Having thus explained the dignity our bleſſed Saviour had aſſumed to himſelf, and demonſtrated that it really belonged to him, he examined the compariſon between himſelf, conſidered as the bread from heaven, and the manna which Moſes provided for their fathers in the howling Wilderneſs. The manna, ſaid he, which your fathers eat in the Deſert, could not preſerve them from temporal or eternal death; but the bread which came down from heaven will render men immortal. *I am the living bread, which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he ſhall live for ever. And the bread that I will give, is my fleſh, which I will give for the life of the world,* John vi. 51.

Though our bleſſed Saviour, on this occaſion, made uſe of no other expreſſions than what the Jews had been accuſtomed to interpret in a figurative ſenſe; yet ſo great was their perverſeneſs, that they conſidered them as ſpoken literally, and were aſtoniſhed beyond meaſure at what he could mean, by ſaying he would give them *his fleſh to eat.* But Jeſus, knowing how unreaſonable his hearers were, did not think proper to explain himſelf more particularly at this time. But perſiſting in the ſame figurative manner of expreſſion, he repeated and affirmed more earneſtly what he had before aſſerted. Except, ſaid he, ye be entirely united to me by a hearty practice, and belief of my doctrine, partake of the merit of that ſacrifice which I ſhall offer for the ſins of the world, continue in the communion of my religion, and receive ſpiritual nouriſhment, by the continual participation of thoſe means of grace which I ſhall purchaſe for you by my death, ye can never enter the happy manſions of eternity. *Whoſo eateth my fleſh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life, and I will raiſe him up at the laſt day. For my fleſh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed,* John vi. 54, 55.

This is the bread, which as I before told you, came down from heaven; a kind of bread infinitely ſuperior to that of manna, both in its nature and efficacy. It is different in its nature from manna, becauſe it is not to be eaten, as your fathers did that food in the Wilderneſs; they *eat manna and are dead.* It is different in its effect, becauſe he that *eateth of this bread ſhall live for ever.*

Theſe particulars Jeſus ſpake in the hearing of all the people, who attended the public worſhip in the ſynagogue of Capernaum, and tho' moſt of the metaphors were very eaſy to be underſtood, yet they could not comprehend what he meant by *eating his fleſh and drinking his blood:* a thing not only prohibited by the law of Moſes, but alſo repugnant to the cuſtoms of all civilized nations. Many therefore, who had followed him, conſidered it as inconſiſtent, and abſolutely abſurd. But Jeſus anſwered, Are you offended, becauſe I told you my fleſh is bread; that it came down from heaven; and that you muſt, in order to have eternal life, eat my fleſh, and drink my blood. But what if ye ſhall ſee the ſon of

man aſcend up bodily into heaven, from whence he was ſent by his heavenly father? You will then ſurely be perſuaded that I really came from heaven; and, at the ſame time, be convinced that you cannot eat my fleſh in a corporal manner. I never meant that you ſhould underſtand the expreſſion literally; my fleſh, in that caſe, would be of no advantage to the children of men. The metaphor was only uſed to indicate, that you muſt believe in the doctrines which I preach; for to reveal theſe, I took upon me the veil of fleſh, and aſſumed the nature of man. It is therefore more properly my ſpirit that confers this life on the human race, and renders them immortal. My doctrine may perhaps be ineffectual to ſome of you, becauſe ye are deſirous of perverting it, and from thence to form a pretence for forſaking me. I well know the ſecret receſſes of every heart; and therefore told you, that no man can believe on me, except it was given him of my father.

The Jews were ſo offended at this diſcourſe, that many of them, who had hitherto been our Saviour's diſciples, went out of the ſynagogue, and never more came to hear him. They found that all their pleaſing views of worldly grandeur, and an extenſive kingdom, could have nothing more than an ideal foundation, if they acknowledged Jeſus to be the Meſſiah. But as they were unwilling to abandon all their favourite hopes of power, they refuſed to own him for the great Redeemer of Iſrael they had ſo long expected.

When the Jews were departed, Jeſus turned himſelf to his diſciples; and with a look of ineffable ſweetneſs, ſaid to them, *Will you alſo go away?* To this Peter anſwered, *Lord, to whom ſhall we go? Thou haſt the words of eternal life. And we believe and are ſure, that thou art the Chriſt, the ſon of the living God,* John vi. 68, 69.

This declaration of Peter was ſpoken in alluſion to what Jeſus had ſaid, that he was the bread of life, founding his faith in him as the Meſſiah. But Jeſus, to convince him that he was not ignorant of the moſt ſecret thoughts of the heart, nor afraid that his enemies ſhould be companions of his moſt retired hours, and witneſſes of his moſt ſecret actions, told him that one of the twelve was a wicked man, and would be guilty of the vileſt action. A circumſtance that was fully accompliſhed, when Judas Iſcariot, one of the twelve, baſely betrayed his great Lord and maſter.

CHAP. XV.

The Phariſees reproved for their ſuperſtition. Jeſus cures the daughter of the woman of Canaan. Heals one that had an impediment in his ſpeech at Decapolis. Feeds again the multitude miraculouſly in the Deſert. Cautions his diſciples to beware of the leaven of the Scribes and Phariſees. And gives ſight to a blind man near Bethſaida.

THE third paſſover ſince our Lord's miniſtry now drew near, and Jeſus went up to Jeruſalem,

ſalem, to celebrate that feaſt. But the Jews, being offended at his diſcourſe in the ſynagogue of Capernaum, made an attempt upon his life. Our Lord, therefore, finding it impoſſible to remain at Jeruſalem in ſafety, departed from that city, as ſoon as the paſſover was ended, and retired into Galilee.

The Phariſees knew, that it would be impoſſible to oppreſs him there by violent methods, but followed him, hoping to find ſomething by which they might accuſe him. They watched every opportunity, and at laſt ventured to attack him for permitting his diſciples to eat with unwaſhed hands, becauſe in ſo doing they tranſgreſſed the tradition of the elders. Moſes had, indeed, required external cleanneſs, as a part of their religion; but it was only to ſignify how careful the ſervants of the Almighty ſhould be to purify their minds from all moral pollutions. Theſe ceremonial inſtitutions were, in proceſs of time, prodigiouſly multiplied; and the Phariſees, who pretended to obſerve every tittle of the law, conſidered it as a notorious offence to eat bread with unwaſhed hands; though at the ſame time they ſuffered the more weighty precepts of the law to be neglected and forgotten.

To ſhew the egregious folly of ſuch ſuperſtitious cuſtoms, our bleſſed Saviour applied to them the words of the prophet Iſaiah. *This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.* Adding, that all their worſhip was vain, and diſpleaſing to the Almighty, while they practiſed themſelves, and impoſed upon others, the frivolous precepts of man's invention, and at the ſame time neglected the eternal rules of righteouſneſs: and to remove all objections that might be brought againſt this imputation of groſs prophaneneſs in the Phariſees, he ſupported it by a very remarkable inſtance. God, ſaid the Saviour of the world, hath commanded children to honour their parents, and to maintain them, when reduced to poverty by ſickneſs, age, or misfortunes; promiſing life to ſuch as obey this precept, and threatening death to thoſe who diſregard it. But notwithſtanding the peremptory commandment of Omnipotence, you teach, that it is a more ſacred duty to enrich the temple, than to nouriſh their parents reduced to the utmoſt neceſſity; pretending that what is offered to the great parent of the univerſe is much better beſtowed than what is given to the ſupport of our earthly parents; making the intereſt of God abſolutely different from that of his creatures. Nay, ye impiouſly teach, that it is no breach of the commandment, for a man to ſuffer his parents to periſh, provided he has given what ought to nouriſh them to the temple of Jeruſalem. Thus have you concealed under the cloke of piety the moſt horrid, the moſt unnatural crime any perſon can commit.

Having ſpoken thus to the Phariſees, he called the multitude to him; and deſired them to reflect on the abſurdity of the precepts inculcated by the Scribes. Theſe hypocrites, ſaid he, ſolicitous about trifles, neglect the great duties of morality, which

which are of eternal obligation. They ſhudder with horror at unwaſhed hands, but are perfectly eaſy, under the guilt of a polluted conſcience; though they muſt be ſenſible that *not that which goeth into the mouth defileth the man: but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth the man*, Matt. xv. 11.

The Phariſees were highly offended at his ſpeaking in a degrading manner of their traditions. And the apoſtles, who would gladly have reconciled their maſter and the Phariſees, inſinuated to Jeſus, that he ought to have acted in another manner. To which our Saviour anſwered, *Every plant which my heavenly father hath not planted, ſhall be plucked up*, Matt. xv. 13. As if he had ſaid, You have no cauſe to fear their anger, as both they and their doctrine ſhall periſh together, for neither of them came from God. Adding, *Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind; and if the blind lead the blind, both ſhall fall into the ditch*, Matt. xv. 14.

This doctrine was not, however, fully underſtood by the diſciples; and therefore they deſired their maſter to explain it. This our Saviour complied with, and ſhewed them, that meats being of a corporal nature, could not defile the mind of man, or render him polluted in the ſight of the Almighty, unleſs they are uſed to exceſs, or in oppoſition to the commandment of God: and even then the pollution aroſe from the man, and not from the meat. But, on the contrary, that which proceedeth out of the mouth of a man, comes from his heart, and really pollutes his mind.

Diſcourſes like theſe could not fail of irritating the Phariſees, as they tended to ſtrip them of the maſk with which they concealed their deformity, and rendered themſelves ſo venerable in the eyes of the vulgar. And accordingly, their plots were levelled againſt his reputation and life. Jeſus, to avoid their malice, retired to the very borders of Paleſtine, to the coaſts of thoſe two celebrated Gentile cities, Tyre and Sidon, propoſing there to conceal himſelf for a time; but he could not be hid. It was as impoſſible for the divine *ſon of righteouſneſs* to be concealed, whereever he came with his healing wings, and meſſage of peace, as it is for the ſun in the firmament, when he riſeth in all his glory, *as a bridgroom coming out of his chamber, and as a giant rejoicing to run his courſe.* For a certain woman of Canaan, having heard of him, determined to implore his aſſiſtance. She was indeed one of the moſt abject ſort of Gentiles, a Canaanite, one of that deteſted race with which the Jews would have no dealing, nor even converſation; but notwithſtanding all theſe diſcouraging circumſtances, ſhe threw herſelf as an humble petitioner, on the benevolent mercies of the Son of God. Strong neceſſity urged her on; grief and inſuperable diſtreſs cauſed her to be importunate. Alas! unhappy parent! Her only daughter, her beloved child, had an unclean ſpirit, *was grievouſly vexed with a devil.*

When ſuch preſſing circumſtances, ſuch miſerable ſorrow ſurrounded her, who can wonder that ſhe was ſo earneſt, and would take no refuſal from his divine perſon, who, ſhe knew, was able to deliver her! Accordingly ſhe came, ſhe fell at his feet, ſhe beſought him, ſhe cried, ſaying, *Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou ſon of David*, have mercy. I plead no merits; as a worthleſs ſuffering wretch, I intreat only the bowels of thy mercy; I intreat it, for I believe thee to be the ſon of David, the promiſed Meſſiah, the much deſired Saviour of the World; have mercy on me, for the caſe of my child and her diſtreſſes are my own; *My daughter is grievouſly vexed with the devil*, Matt. xv. 22.

Who can help admiring that ſuch a petitioner ſhould be rejected; and rejected by a bountiful and merciful Redeemer, who kindly invited all that were heavy laden to come to him; who promiſed never to caſt out any that would come, and whoſe buſineſs it was, *to go about doing good*.

We however find, he anſwered this woman not a word: he did not, in appearance, take the leaſt notice either of her or her diſtreſs! But this ſilence did not intimidate her; ſhe ſtill cried, ſhe ſtill beſought, ſhe ſtill importunately preſſed her petition; ſo that the very diſciples were moved with her cries, and became her advocates. They themſelves, though Jews, beſought their maſter to diſmiſs this petitioner, to grant her requeſt, and to ſend her away.

But Jeſus ſoon ſilenced them, by an anſwer agreeable to their own prejudices. *I am not ſent*, ſaid he, *but unto the loſt ſheep of the houſe of Iſrael*. To this the diſciples readily aſſented; and as they had a high opinion of the Jews prerogative, were ſo well ſatisfied with the anſwer, that we hear them pleading no more for this loſt, this miſerable Gentile.

But ſhe herſelf was not ſo eaſily ſatisfied; it was her own cauſe, and what is immediately our own concern, animates us to the moſt zealous application. Somewhat encouraged that ſhe was the ſubject of diſcourſe between our Lord and his diſciples, ſhe ventured to approach the Saviour of the world, though ſhe well knew that the law actually forbids ſuch an intercourſe; yet ſhe came, ſhe worſhipped *this ſon of David*, ſhe confeſſed again his divinity, and prayed, ſaying, *Lord, help me*.

Jeſus now condeſcended to ſpeak to her, but with words ſeemingly ſufficient to have diſcouraged every farther attempt; nay, to have filled her with bitter diſlike to his perſon, though ſhe had conceived ſuch high and noble notions of his mercy and favour: *It is not meet*, ſaid he, *to take the children's bread, and to caſt it to dogs*, Matt. xv. 26. It is not juſtice to deprive the Jews, who are the children of the covenant, the deſcendants of Abraham, of any part of thoſe bleſſings which I came into the world to beſtow, eſpecially to you, who are aliens and ſtrangers from the commonwealth of Iſrael.

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This anſwer, however ſevere, could not ſhake her humility, nor overcome her patience; ſhe meekly anſwered, *Truth, Lord*; *yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their maſter's table*, Matt. xv. 27. Let me enjoy that kindneſs, which the dogs of any family are not denied; from the plenty of miraculous cures, which thou beſtoweſt on the Jews, drop this one to me, who am a poor diſtreſſed Heathen; for they will ſuffer no greater loſs by it than the children of a family do by the crumbs which are caſt to the dogs.

Our Saviour having thus evidently proved, that the woman poſſeſſed a very high degree of faith, a juſt notion of his power and goodneſs, and of her own unworthineſs, wrought with pleaſure the cure ſhe ſollicited in behalf of her daughter; and, at the ſame time, gave her faith the praiſes it ſo juſtly deſerved. *Oh! woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt: and her daughter was made whole from that very hour*, Matt. xv. 29.

After performing this miracle, on the coaſt of the Gentiles, Jeſus returned to the ſea of Galilee, through the region of Decapolis. In this country, a man was brought to him, who was deaf, and had an impediment in his ſpeech. Objects in diſtreſs were always treated with benevolence by the holy Jeſus; but as the people now thronged about him, in expectation, that he would ſoon eſtabliſh his kingdom, he thought proper to take the man, with his relations, aſide from the multitude; after which he put his fingers in his ears, and touched his tongue, that the deaf man, who could not be inſtructed by language, might know from whence all his benefits flowed. He then *looked up to heaven, and ſighed, and ſaid unto him, Ephphatha, that is, be opened. And ſtraightway his ears were opened, and the ſtring of his tongue was looſed, and he ſpake plain. And he charged them that they ſhould tell no man.* Mark vii. 34, 35, 36.

The prohibition, however, had very little effect either on the man, or his relations. They publiſhed it in every part of the country, doubtleſs thinking, they could not be too laviſh in the praiſes of ſo great a benefactor: eſpecially as the modeſty, with which he had performed the cure, abundantly demonſtrated, that his ſole view was the benefit of the human race.

The crowds now began to gather round him in Decapolis; for the fame of his miracles was extended to every corner of the country: he therefore, to avoid thoſe prodigious crowds of people, retired into a deſert mountain, near the ſea of Galilee. But the ſolitary retreats of the Wilderneſs were unable to conceal this beneficent Saviour of the human race. They ſoon diſcovered his retreat, and brought to him from all quarters the ſick, the lame, the dumb, the blind, and the maimed. The ſight of ſo many objects in diſtreſs, ſo excited the compaſſion of the Son of God, that he graciouſly releaſed them from all their complaints. Miracles like theſe could not fail

of aſtoniſhing the ſpectators, eſpecially thoſe performed upon the dumb; for it muſt be remembered, that he not only conferred on thoſe, the faculty of hearing, and pronouncing, articulate ſounds; but conveyed at once into their minds, the whole language of their country; they were inſtantly acquainted with all the words it contained, their ſignifications, their forms, their powers, and their uſes: at the ſame time they enjoyed the habit of ſpeaking it both fluently and copiouſly. This was ſurely enough to demonſtrate to the moſt ſtupid, that ſuch works could have been effected by nothing leſs than infinite power. *The multitude wondered, when they ſaw the dumb to ſpeak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to ſee; and they glorified the God of Iſrael.* Matt. xv. 31.

Theſe mighty works detained the multitude in the Deſert with Jeſus three days, during which time they ſpent all the proviſions they had brought into this ſolitary place. But Jeſus would not ſend them away faſting, leſt any who had followed him ſo far from their habitations, ſhould faint in their return. Accordingly he again exerted his almighty power to feed the multitude a ſecond time in the Wilderneſs.

I cannot help remarking here, the great wiſdom of our bleſſed Saviour, in chuſing to ſpend ſo great a part of the time he executed his public miniſtry, in the Wilderneſs and in ſolitary places. He did not ſeek the applauſes of men, but the eternal ſalvation of their ſouls; and therefore, often delivered his doctrines in the ſilent retreats of the Deſert, whither he was followed by ſuch only as had diſpoſitions proper for profiting by his inſtructions. It could not indeed be ſuſpected, that many of different diſpoſitions would accompany him into ſolitudes, where they were to ſuſtain the inconveniences of hunger for ſeveral days ſucceſſively, and be at the ſame time expoſed to all the inclemencies of the weather. Thoſe only who were deſirous of inſtruction, could therefore be expected to follow the bleſſed Jeſus into thoſe retired parts; and on thoſe, doubtleſs, his doctrine diſtilled like dew, and like the ſmall rain upon the tender herb. Happy mortals, who thus exchanged the ſhallow and frothy ſtreams of folly, for the deep and ſalutary rivers of eternal wiſdom! who left the noiſe and buſtle of coveteous bigoted people, for the calm inſtructions of the Son of God! and exchanged the periſhing bread of this world, for the *bread of life, the bread that came down from heaven!*

After feeding the multitude miraculouſly, Jeſus retired into a diſtrict, called Dalmanutha, a part of the territory of Magdala. Here he was viſited by the Phariſees, who, having heard, that he had a ſecond time fed the multitude miraculouſly, were fearful, that the common people would acknowledge him for the Meſſiah; and therefore determined openly and publicly, to confute his pretenſions to that character.

In order to this, they boldly demanded of him, a ſign from heaven;

ven; for it muſt be remembered that the Jews expected the Meſſiah would make his firſt public appearance in the clouds of heaven, and in a glorious manner eſtabliſh a temporal kingdom. This opinion was founded on the following prophecy of Daniel, which they underſtood literally: *I ſaw in the night-viſions, and behold, one like the ſon of man, came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages ſhould ſerve him: His dominion is an everlaſting dominion, which ſhall not paſs away, and his kingdom that which ſhall not be deſtroyed,* Dan. vii. 13, 14.

The Phariſees therefore, by deſiring Jeſus to ſhew them a ſign from heaven, meant that he ſhould demonſtrate himſelf to be the Meſſiah, by coming in a viſible and miraculous manner from heaven, and wreſting with great pomp, the ſceptre of David from the hands of the Romans.

Had the Phariſees been deſirous of knowing the truth, the proofs which Jeſus was daily giving them, would have been more than ſufficient to eſtabliſh the truth of his miſſion, and demonſtrate that he was the long-expected Meſſiah. But they were not deſirous of being convinced; and to that alone, and not to want of evidence, or of capacity in themſelves, it was owing that they refuſed to acknowledge our Saviour to be the Perſon foretold by the prophets. Their diſpoſition was abſolutely incorrigible; ſo that Jeſus ſighed deeply in his ſpirit, and declared that the ſign they ſought, ſhould never be given them; and that the only ſign they were to expect, was that of the prophet Jonas, or the miracle of his own reſurrection: a ſign, indeed, much greater than any ſhewn by the ancient prophets; and conſequently a ſign which demonſtrated, that Jeſus was far ſuperior to them all. *A wicked and adulterous generation ſeeketh after a ſign, and there ſhall no ſign be given unto it, but the ſign of the prophet Jonas,* Matt. xvi. 4.

Having given this anſwer to the Phariſees, he departed with his diſciples, and entered into a ſhip; and as they ſailed, he cautioned them to beware of the doctrine of the Phariſees and Sadducees, which he termed leaven, from its pernicious influence in filling the minds of men with pride, and other irregular paſſions; theſe hypocrites chiefly inſiſting on the obſervation of frivolous traditions, but neglecting the true principles of piety, and hence filling the minds of their diſciples with an high opinion of their own ſanctity. But the diſciples, having forgotten to take bread with them, underſtood, that he intended to caution them againſt procuring it from the heathens, or Samaritans. They were ſo ſtupid as not to know that their maſter, who had fed above ten thouſand people with five loaves, was alſo capable of providing for them in their neceſſities.

After croſſing the lake, and landing at Bethſaida, they brought unto him a blind man, deſiring that he

would heal him: Jeſus, accordingly, took the man by the hand, and led him out of the city, and having ſpit upon his eyes, and put his hands upon him, aſked him if he ſaw aught? To which the man anſwered, *I ſee men as trees walking:* a very proper expreſſion to convey an idea of the indiſtinctneſs of his viſion. Jeſus then put his hands again upon him, and he was reſtored to ſight, *and ſaw every man clearly.* It ſhould be remembred, that the people of Bethſaida had, by their ingratitude, impenitence, and infidelity greatly diſpleaſed the Saviour of the world; and this perhaps, was the reaſon, why Jeſus would not perform the cure in that city, but led the man out into the adjacent plain. The people alſo had for a long time been ſollicitous, that he would take upon himſelf the character of the Meſſiah; and therefore, he choſe to perform this miracle without the city, that it might not again move them to make a ſecond attempt, ſo diſagreable to the meek and humble Jeſus.

CHAP. XVI.

Our Saviour beſtows on Peter the power of the keys. Declares that he will judge the world. And is transfigured in the country of Cæſarea Philippi.

SOON after reſtoring the blind man to ſight, he departed from Bethſaidai, and retired into the territory of Cæſarea Philippi; where, being deſirous of proving, in ſome meaſure, the faith of the Apoſtles, he aſked them ſaying, *Whom do men ſay that I the ſon of man, am?* In anſwer to this queſtion the diſciples replied, *Some ſay that thou art John the Baptiſt, ſome Elias, and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets,* Matt. xvi. 14. The people in general, miſtook the character of our Saviour; becauſe he did not aſſume that outward pomp and grandeur, with which they ſuppoſed the Meſſiah would be adorned. Jeſus was, therefore deſirous of knowing what idea his diſciples formed of his character, as they had long enjoyed the benefit of his doctrines and miracles; and accordingly asked them, what they themſelves underſtood him to be? To this queſtion, Simon Peter replied, *Thou art Chriſt the ſon of the living God.*

This title our Saviour accepted; telling Peter, that God alone had revealed the ſecret to him. And in alluſion to his ſurname, *Peter*, which ſignifies a *rock*, our Saviour promiſed that he ſhould have a principal hand in eſtabliſhing his kingdom, and that the Chriſtian Church ſhould be erected on his labours, as on a ſolid foundation; never to be deſtroyed. *And I ſay alſo unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church: and the gates of hell ſhall not prevail againſt it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatſoever thou ſhalt bind on earth, ſhall be bound in heaven: and whatſoever thou ſhalt looſe on earth, ſhalt be looſed in heaven,* Matt xvi. 18, 19.

After making this declaration, our Saviour ſtrictly forbad his diſciples to

to tell any man, that he was the Meſſiah; becauſe it had been decreed in the courts of heaven, that he ſhould be rejected by the rulers of Iſrael as a falſe Chriſt, and ſuffer the pains of death. Circumſtances which could not fail of giving his followers great offence, as they did not yet underſtand the true nature of his kingdom; and therefore he thought proper to let every man form a judgment of his miſſion, from his doctrines and miracles; and not aſſume publickly the character of the Meſſiah, under ſuch great diſadvantages.

The foregoing diſcourſes, had, doubtleſs, filled the Apoſtle's minds with lofty imaginations; and therefore our Saviour thought proper to acquaint them with his ſufferings, in order to check any fond expectations of temporal power. Peter, however, was greatly diſpleaſed to hear his maſter talk of dying at Jeruſalem, when he had juſt before accepted of the title of Meſſiah. Accordingly, he rebuked him for the expreſſion, which he was ſo bold as to think unguarded. But Jeſus, turning himſelf about, ſaid unto Peter *Get thee behind me, Satan, thou art an offence unto me: for thou ſavoureſt not the things that be of God, but thoſe that be of men*, Matt. xvi. 23.

As this indecent behaviour of Peter proceeded entirely from his love of the world, and its bewitching pleaſures, our Saviour thought proper to declare publickly, that all who intended to ſhare with him in the glory of the heavenly Canaan, muſt deny themſelves; that is, they muſt be always ready to renounce every worldly pleaſure, and even life itſelf, when the cauſe of religion required it: he alſo told them, that in this life they muſt expect to meet with troubles and diſappointments; and that whoever intended to be his diſciple, muſt *take up his croſs daily, and follow him.*

Thus did the bleſſed Jeſus inform his diſciples of the true nature of his kingdom; and at the ſame time intimated, that though they had already undergone many afflictions, yet they muſt expect ſtill more, and greater, which they muſt ſuſtain with equal fortitude, following their maſter in the footſteps of his afflictions. This duty, however hard, was abſolutely neceſſary; becauſe, by loſing their temporal life, they would gain that which was eternal: *For whoſoever will ſave his life, ſhall loſe it: but whoſoever will loſe his life for my ſake, the ſame ſhall ſave it*, Luke ix. 24. *For what is a man profited, if he ſhall gain the whole world, and loſe his own ſoul? Or what ſhall a man give in exchange for his ſoul?* Matt. xvi. 26.

In order to give a greater weight to this argument, and inforce the neceſſity of ſelf-denial, our Saviour particularly declared, that a day was fixed for diſtributing rewards and puniſhments to all the human race; and that he himſelf was appointed by the father, as univerſal judge; ſo that his enemies could not flatter themſelves with the hope of eſcaping the puniſhments they deſerved, nor his friends be afraid of loſing their eternal reward. *Whoſoever therefore ſhall be aſhamed of me, and of my*

words, in this adulterous and ſinful generation, of him alſo ſhall the ſon of man be aſhamed, when he cometh in the glory of his father, with the holy angels, Mark viii. 38.

He added, as an encouragement to his diſciples, that he would not appear to judge the world in his low and deſpiſed condition, but magnificently arrayed in both his own and his father's glory: not attended by twelve weak diſciples, but ſurrounded by miriads of celeſtial ſpirits, with numberleſs hoſts of mighty angels; nor ſhould his rewards be the great offices, and large poſſeſſions of a temporal kingdom, but the joys of immortality.

Let us contemplate this awful, this auguſt perſonage, the great judge of quick and dead. He ſhall come in the majeſtic ſplendor of his glorified body, pompouſly arrayed with the inacceſſible light wherein Jehovah reſides, and which darting through, and enlightening the infinite regions of ſpace, with its ineffable brightneſs, ſhall make even the ſun to to diſappear. Dreſſed in this awful manner, the great judge, attended by the whole celeſtial hoſt, will *deſcend from heaven with a ſhout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God*, 1 Theſſ. iv. 16. making heaven, earth, and hell to reſound. The dead of all countries, and all times, will hear the tremendous call. Hark! the living filled with joy, exult at the approach of Omnipotence; or ſeized with inexpreſſible horror, ſend up the moſt piercing cries, and are all changed in a moment in the twinkling of an eye! The dead preſs forth from their graves, and follow each other in cloſe proceſſion! Behold—but, ah! nothing can behold; nothing can bear his preſence! The heavens depart like a ſcroll rolling itſelf together! Every mountain and every iſland is moved! The bond, the free, the rich, the great, captains and kings, to avoid the face of him that ſitteth on the throne, the preſence of the lamb, ruſh beneath trembling mountains, and plunge into flaming rivers! but neither mountain nor flame will devour them, for they are raiſed immortal. Behold him then, for all muſt behold him! even his eye, whoſe unthinking hand drove the nails at Calvary; nor heavens, nor earth exiſt, ſtars, and ſun are vaniſhed, leſt they ſhould darken the proceſſion! Once the crucifixion of Jeſus, and now his glory extinguiſhes the ſun! Lo! hell, with what reluctance, comes forth for ſentence! Lo! two worlds to be judged, and the third an aſſiſtant ſpectator! Behold! with what beauty, with what boldneſs, with what joy, ſome ſpring forward toward the judgment ſeat! See, on the other hand, how amazed, how terrified, the wicked appear, with what vehemence they wiſh the extinction of their being! Fain, would they fly, but cannot; impelled by a force, ſtrong as neceſſity, they haſten to the place of judgment: as they advance the ſight of the tribunal from afar ſtrikes them with new terror. They approach in the deepeſt ſilence, and gather round the throne by thouſands and thouſands. In the mean time the angels having gathered together

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the elect from the uttermoſt parts of the earth, fly around the numberleſs multitudes, chanting melodious ſongs, and rejoicing that the day of general retribution is come, when vice ſhall be thrown from its high poſt of uſurpation, and virtue exalted to the pinnacle of honour; when the intricacies of Providence ſhall be unravelled, the perfections of the Almighty vindicated, the Church of Chriſt purchaſed with his blood, cleared from her iniquitous members, and every thing that offendeth baniſhed for ever.

Behold! the books are opened, ſilence is proclaimed, and every individual filled with an awful conſciouſneſs, that he in particular is obſerved by the Almighty; ſo that not one ſingle perſon can be concealed in the immenſity of the crowd. The judge who can be biaſſed by no bribes, ſoftened by no ſubtle inſinuations, impoſed upon by no feigned excuſes, needs no evidence, but diſtinguiſhes with an unerring certainty. They ſeparate! They feel their judgment in them, and haſten to their proper places: the righteous on one hand of the throne, and the wicked on the other. Behold, how beautiful with the brightneſs of virtue, do the righteous ſtand at God's tribunal! Their looks are ſerene, and expreſſive of hopes full of immortality. On the other hand, the wicked confounded at the remembrance of their paſt lives, terrified with the bitter apprehenſions of what is to come, hang down their dejected heads, and wiſh to hide themſelves in the fathomleſs abyſs, but all in vain; there is no eſcaping nor appealing from this tribunal. Behold, with mercy ſhining in his countenance, the king invites the righteous to take poſſeſſion of the kingdom prepared for them from the beginning of the world; but with frowns of anger, drives the wicked to puniſhments, which ſhall have no end, no remiſſion, no alleviation. What horror, what deſpair, muſt ſeize theſe wretched ſouls, when they ſee hell gaping, hear the devils howling, and feel the unſpeakable torment of an awakened conſcience! Now they ſeek for death, but find it not; would gladly be righteous, but it is too late.

The happy land of promiſe, formed by the hand of the Almighty, large, beautiful, and pleaſant, a proper habitation for his people, and long expected by them as their country, now appears. Here all the righteous are aſſembled, forming one vaſt, one happy ſociety, even the kingdom, the city of God. Here Omnipotence manifeſts himſelf in a peculiar manner to his ſervants, wipes away all tears from off their faces, and adorns them with the beauties of immortality. Here they drink a plenitude of joys from the cryſtal river, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the lamb, and eat of the fruit of the tree of life. Here there ſhall be no death, nor ſorrow, nor crying; neither ſhall there be any more pain. Happy day! happy place! and happy people! Imagination faints with the fatigue of ſtretching itſelf, to comprehend the vaſt, the unmeaſurable thought.

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As the doctrine of Chriſt being appointed the univerſal judge might appear incredible at that time, on account of his humiliation, he told them, that ſome who then heard him ſpeak ſhould not taſte of death, till they ſaw him coming in his kingdom. *Verily I ſay unto you, There be ſome ſtanding here, which ſhall not taſte of death, till they ſee the ſon of man coming in his kingdom*, Matt. xvi. 28. There are ſome here preſent, that ſhall not die, till they ſee a faint repreſentation of the glory in which I ſhall come at the laſt day, and an eminent example of my power, inflicted on the men of this ſinful generation.

Accordingly, the diſciples lived to ſee their maſter, coming in his kingdom, when they were witneſſes of his transfiguration, reſurrection, and aſcenſion, and had the miraculous gifts of the holy ſpirit, conferred upon them; lived to ſee Jeruſalem, with the Jewiſh ſtate, deſtroyed, and the Goſpel propagated through the greateſt part of the then known world. About eight days after this diſcourſe, our bleſſed Saviour being with the multitude in the country of Cæſarea Philippi, he left them in the plain, and accompanied with Peter, James, and John, aſcended an exceeding high mountain. In this ſolitude, while Jeſus was praying with theſe three diſciples, he was transfigured; his face became radiant and dazzling, for it ſhone like the ſun in his meridian clearneſs. At the ſame time his garments acquired a ſnowy whiteneſs, far beyond any thing human art could produce; a whiteneſs bright as the light, and ſweetly refulgent, but in a degree inferior to the radiance of his countenance. Thus, as it were, for an inſtant, the Son of God, during his ſtate of humiliation, ſuffered the glory of his divinity to ſhine through the veil of human nature, with which it was covered; and to heighten the grandeur and ſolemnity of the ſcene, Moſes the great law-giver of Iſrael, and Elijah a zealous defender of the laws, appeared in the beauties of immortality, the robes in which the inhabitants of the heavenly Canaan are adorned.

The diſciples, it ſeems, did not ſee the transfiguration begin; for happening to fall aſleep at the time of prayer, they loſt that pleaſure, together with a great part of the converſation which theſe two prophets held with the only begotten Son of God. They, however, underſtood, that the ſubject was his meritorious ſufferings and death; by which he was to redeem the world: a ſubject that had, a few days before, given great offence to the diſciples, particularly to Peter. At beholding this illuſtrious ſight, the diſciples were greatly amazed; but the forwardneſs of Peter's diſpoſition prompting him to ſay ſomething, he uttered he knew not what: *Maſter*, ſaid he, *It is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, one for Moſes, and one for Elias*, Mark ix. 5.

Peter, doubtleſs, fancied that Jeſus had now aſſumed his proper dignity; that Elias was come according to

to Malachi's prediction, and that the Meſſiah's kingdom was at length begun. Accordingly, he thought it was neceſſary to provide ſome accommodation for his maſter and his auguſt aſſiſtants, intending perhaps, to bring the reſt of the diſciples with the multitude from the plain below, to behold his matchleſs glory. This he thought was much better for his maſter, than to be put to death at Jeruſalem, concerning which, Jeſus had been talking with the meſſengers from heaven, and the deſign of which Peter could not comprehend. But, *While he yet ſpake, behold a bright cloud overſhadowed them; and behold a voice out of the cloud, which ſaid, This is my beloved ſon, in whom I am well pleaſed; hear ye him*, Matt. xvii. 5.

When the three diſciples heard the voice, which, like the roaring thunder, burſt from the cloud, and was ſuch as mortals were unaccuſtomed to hear, they fell on their faces, and continued in that poſture till Jeſus approached, and raiſing them up, diſpelled their fears, ſaying unto them, *Ariſe, and be not afraid. And when they had lift up their eyes, they ſaw no man, ſave Jeſus only*, Matt. xvii. 7, 8.

Jeſus, having continued all night, with his three diſciples in the mountain, returned to the plain early in the morning, charging them to conceal what they had ſeen, till after he was riſen from the dead. He well knew that the world, and even his own diſciples, were not yet able to comprehend the deſign of his transfiguration; and that if it had been publiſhed before his reſurrection, it might have appeared incredible: becauſe nothing but afflictions and perſecutions had hitherto attended him. *He was truly a man of ſorrows, and acquainted with grief.*

But the doctrine of the reſurrection was what the diſciples were utterly unable to underſtand. They had never learnt that the Meſſiah was to die; far leſs that he was to be raiſed from the dead. They were, on the contrary, perſuaded, that he was to abide for ever; and that his kingdom was to have no end: they were alſo greatly ſurpriſed at the ſudden departure of Elias, and could not comprehend what the Scribes meant by affirming that he muſt appear before the Meſſiah erects his empire. They, therefore, after long debating among themſelves, asked their maſter, *why ſay the Scribes, that Elias muſt firſt come?* To which Jeſus anſwered, that Elias ſhould truly come firſt, according to the prediction of Malachi, *and reſtore all things*; but, at the ſame time, he aſſured them, that Elias was already come, and deſcribed the treatment he had met with from that ſtiff-necked people; giving them to underſtand that he ſpake of John the Baptiſt. *But I ſay unto you that Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatſoever they have liſted: likewiſe, ſhall alſo the ſon of man ſuffer of them. Then the diſciples underſtood, that he ſpake unto them of John the Baptiſt*, Matt. xvii. 12, 13.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVII.

Jeſus cureth a youth afflicted with a dumb ſpirit. Pays the tax at Capernaum. Reproves his diſciples for contending about pre-eminence. Enjoins the forgiveneſs of injuries; and delivers the parable of the ſervant-debtors.

AS Jeſus came near the foot of the mountain, accompanied by his three diſciples, he ſaw a great multitude, ſurrounding the nine who continued in the plain, and the Scribes diſputing with them. The people, ſeeing Jeſus coming from the mountain, ran to him, and ſaluted him with particular reverence. After which Jeſus aſked the Scribes, what was the ſubject of their debate with his diſciples? to which one of the multitude anſwered, *Maſter, I have brought unto thee my ſon, which hath a dumb ſpirit: And whereſoever he taketh him, he teareth him; and he foameth and gnaſheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I ſpake unto thy diſciples, that they ſhould caſt him out, and they could not*, Mark ix. 17, 18. This anſwer being made by one of the multitude, and not by the Scribes to whom the queſtion was directed, indicates, that they had been diſputing with the diſciples on their not being able to cure this afflicted youth; perhaps their making this unſucceſsful attempt had given the Scribes occaſion to boaſt, that a devil was at length found, which neither they nor their maſter were able to conquer. This ſeems to be indicated by the manner in which our Saviour addreſſed himſelf to theſe arrogant rulers. *Oh faithleſs generation*, ſays he, *how long ſhall I be with you? how long ſhall I ſuffer you?* Will no miracles ever be able to convince you? Muſt I always bear with your infidelity? You have ſurely ſeen ſufficient demonſtrations of my power, notwithſtanding ye ſtill diſcover the moſt criminal infidelity. After ſpeaking in this manner to the Scribes, he turned himſelf to the father of the young man, and ſaid, *bring thy ſon hither.* But no ſooner was he brought in ſight of his deliverer, than the evil ſpirit attacked him, as it were, with double fury, *the ſpirit tare him, and he fell upon the ground, and wallowed foaming*, Mark ix. 20. Jeſus could eaſily have prevented this attack; but he permitted it, that the minds of the ſpectators might be impreſſed with a more lively idea of this youth's diſtreſs. And for the ſame reaſon it was, that he aſked the father, how long he had been in this deplorable condition? To which the afflicted parent anſwered. *Of a child. And oft-times it hath caſt him into the fire, and into the waters to deſtroy him: but if thou canſt do any thing, have compaſſion on us, and help us*, Mark ix. 21, 22.

The inability of our Lord's diſciples to caſt out this ſpirit had greatly diſcouraged the afflicted father; and the terrible miſery of his ſon, and the remembrance of its long continuance ſo diſpirited him, that he began to fear this poſſeſſion was even too great for the power of Jeſus himſelf,

ſelf, as the Scribes had before affirmed; and therefore could not help expreſſing his doubts and fears. But Jeſus, to make him ſenſible of his miſtake, ſaid to him, *If thou canſt believe, all things are poſſible to him that believeth.* On which the father cried out with tears, *Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief.* The vehement manner in which he ſpake cauſing the crowd to gather from every quarter, *Jeſus rebuked the foul ſpirit*; ſaying unto him, *Thou dumb and deaf ſpirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him,* Mark ix. 25.

No ſooner was the heavenly mandate uttered than the devil with a hideous howling, and convulſing the ſuffering patient in the moſt deplorable manner, came out, leaving the youth ſenſeleſs, and without motion; till Jeſus taking him by the hand, reſtored him to life, and delivered him perfectly recovered to his father.

The nine diſciples, during this whole tranſaction, remained ſilent. They were doubtleſs mortified to think, that they had loſt, by ſome fault of their own, the power of working miracles, lately conferred upon them by their maſter; and for this reaſon, were afraid to ask him in the preſence of the multitude. But when they came into the houſe, they deſired Jeſus to inform them, why they failed in their attempt to heal that remarkable youth? To which Jeſus anſwered, *Becauſe of your unbelief.* But, to encourage them, he deſcribed the efficacy of the faith of miracles. *If you have faith as a grain of muſtard-ſeed, you ſhall ſay to this mountain remove hence to yonder place, and it ſhall remove; and nothing ſhall be impoſſible unto you,* Matt. xviii. 20. Nothing ſhall be too great for you to accompliſh when the glory of God and the good of his Church are concerned, provided you have a proper degree of faith; even yonder mountain, which bids defiance to the ſtorm, and ſmiles at all the attacks of its mingled horrors, ſhall, at your command, leave its firm baſis, and remove to another place.

This miracle, performed on the youth poſſeſſed with a dumb ſpirit, ſeems to have aſtoniſhed the diſciples more than any other they had ſeen their maſter perform: ſo that our Saviour found it neceſſary to moderate their high admiration of his works, by again predicting his own death, and retiring for a time into the unfrequented parts of Galilee. But they could not comprehend how the Meſſiah, who was to abide for ever, and was come to deliver others from the ſtroke of death, ſhould himſelf fall by the hand of that univerſal deſtroyer. And, becauſe he ſpake of riſing again the third day, they could not conceive the reaſon for his dying at all, and for his lying ſo ſhort a time in the chambers of the grave.

They were however exceeding ſorry, but feared to ask him; remembring, that he had often inculcated this doctrine, and reprimanded Peter for being unwilling to hear it.

After a ſhort tour through the uninhabited parts of Galilee, Jeſus returned to Capernaum, the place of his

his general reſidence. And ſoon after his arrival, the tax-gatherers came to Peter, and asked him, whether his maſter would pay the tribute? That diſciple, it ſeems, had promiſed that Jeſus would ſatisfy their demand; but on a more mature conſideration feared to ask him, concerning his paying taxes on any pretence whatſoever. Jeſus was, however, no ſtranger to what had happened, and the fear of Peter to ask him; and therefore turned the diſcourſe to this ſubject, by ſaying to him, *What thinkeſt thou, Simon? Of whom do the kings of the earth take cuſtom or tribute? Of their own children, or of ſtrangers? Peter ſaith unto him, of ſtrangers. Jeſus ſaith unto him, then are the children free*; inſinuating that as he was himſelf the ſon of the great king, to whom heaven, earth, and ſea belong, he had no right to pay tribute to any monarch whatever, becauſe he held nothing by a derived right. Or, if we ſuppoſe this contribution was made for the ſervice and reparation of the temple, he meant, that as he was himſelf the ſon of that Omnipotent Being to whom the tribute was paid, he could have juſtly excuſed himſelf. But the bleſſed Jeſus was always careful not to give offence; and therefore ſent Peter to the lake with a line and a hook, telling him, that in the mouth of the firſt fiſh that came up, he ſhould find a piece of money equal to the ſum demanded of them both. *Notwithſtanding, leſt we ſhould offend them, go thou to the ſea, and caſt an hook, and take up the fiſh that firſt cometh up; and, when thou haſt opened his mouth, thou ſhalt find a piece of money: that take and give unto them, for me and thee*, Matt. xvii. 27.

Jeſus choſe to provide the tribute money in this manner; becauſe the miracle was of ſuch a kind as could not fail to demonſtrate that he was the ſon of the great monarch worſhipped in the temple, and who rules the univerſe. In the very manner therefore of paying this tribute, he ſhewed Peter, that he was free from all taxes; and at the ſame time gave this uſeful leſſon to his followers, that when their property is affected only in a ſmall degree, it is better to recede a little from their juſt rights than to offend their brethren, or diſturb the ſtate, by obſtinately inſiſting on them.

Notwithſtanding our bleſſed Saviour had lately foretold his own ſufferings and death, and though theſe melancholy accounts had greatly afflicted the minds of his diſciples, yet their grief was of no long continuance; for within a few days they had forgot the predictions of their maſter, and diſputed with each other about the chief poſts of honour and profit in the Meſſiah's kingdom. This debate was overheard by the bleſſed Jeſus, though he did not mention it till after the tax-gatherers were retired, when he aſked them, what they were diſputing about on the way? This queſtion rendered them all ſilent. They were fearful of diſcovering the cauſe that had given riſe to the debate, as they knew it would draw on them a reprimand from their maſter. Jeſus perceiving

perceiving that they ſtill continued ſilent, ſat down; ordering them all to ſtand round him, and attend to what he was going to deliver. If any man, ſaid the Saviour of the world, is ambitious of being the greateſt perſon in my kingdom, let him endeavour to obtain that dignity by preferring others in honour, and by doing them all the good offices in his power. *If any man deſires to be firſt, the ſame ſhall be laſt, and ſervant of all,* Mark ix. 35.

The diſciples were now convinced, that it was in vain to conceal the ſubject of the debate that had happened on the way; and accordingly they drew near to their maſter, deſiring him to decide a point which had often given occaſion to diſputes: *Who,* ſaid they, *is the greateſt in the kingdom of heaven?* Matt. xviii. 1. Jeſus, to check theſe fooliſh emulations in his diſciples, called a little child unto him, and placed him in the midſt, that they might conſider him attentively: and ſaid unto them, *Verily I ſay unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye ſhall not enter into the kingdom of heaven,* Matt. xviii. 3. Unleſs ye abandon pride, covetouſneſs, and ambition, and reſemble theſe little children in humility, ſincerity, and diſregard for the things of the preſent life; ye ſhall be ſo far from becoming the greateſt in my kingdom, that ye ſhall never enter its borders. But whoſoever ſhall be ſatisfied with the ſtation in which God has placed him, receive with meekneſs all the divine inſtructions, however contrary to his own inclinations, and prefer others to himſelf; that man is really the greateſt in my kingdom. *Whoſoever therefore ſhall humble himſelf, as this little child, the ſame is greateſt in the kingdom of heaven,* Matt. xviii. 4.

Jeſus then, to make his diſciples ſenſible how truly acceptable the grace of humility is to the Almighty, took the child in his arms, declaring that whoever humbled themſelves, like a little child, and ſhewed kindneſs to their fellow-creatures, ſhould have the ſame kindneſs ſhewed them in the great day of account, eſpecially if they performed theſe worthy actions, in obedience to his commands.

Poſſibly James and John, the ſons of Zebedee, might be principally concerned in this debate; for we find that John endeavoured to divert it, by telling his maſter, they had ſeen one caſting out devils in his name, and had forbidden him, becauſe he did not join himſelf to their company. To which Jeſus replied, that they ſhould not have forbidden him, ſince he muſt have entertained very high notions of their maſter's power, at ſeeing the devils leave the bodies of them on mentioning the name of Jeſus. *Forbid him not: for there is no man, which ſhall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly ſpeak evil of me,* Mark ix. 39.

You ſhould, added the bleſſed Jeſus, conſider that every one who does not perſecute us is a friend; and that the ejection of devils in my name will advance my reputation, and promote my intereſt, even though the exorciſt, and the devils themſelves,

ſhould deſign the contrary. He alſo told his diſciples that the leaſt degree of reſpect ſhewed him by any one, even though it ſhould be no more than the giving a cup of cold water to his thirſty diſciples, is acceptable to him, and ſhould not fail of meeting with an adequate reward. *For whoſoever ſhall give you a cup of water in my name, becauſe ye belong to Chriſt, verily I ſay unto you, he ſhall not loſe his reward,* Mark xi. 41.

But on the other hand, the leaſt diſcouragement given to my ſervants in their duty, come from what quarter it will, ſhall be puniſhed with the greateſt ſeverity. *And whoſoever ſhall offend one of theſe little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a mill-ſtone were hanged about his neck, and he were caſt into the ſea,* Mark ix. 42.

And from hence our bleſſed Saviour inferred, that it was more advantageous to deny ourſelves the higheſt enjoyments of this world, and to part with every thing however precious, repreſented by an hand, a foot, or an eye, than by theſe to cauſe the weakeſt of his friends to ſtumble. And as the diſciples were appointed to ſow the ſeeds of virtue and religion in the world, or, according to the metaphor, to ſalt the people for an offering to heaven, in alluſion to ſacrifice being ſalted at the temple; Jeſus exhorted them to mortify themſelves, that they might appear worthy of ſo high an office as that of ſalting mankind for the altar of heaven: for, as they were to be the ſalt of the earth, it was requiſite they ſhould themſelves be filled with the ſpiritual ſalt of all the graces, and particularly the holy ſalt of love and peace, that they might as far as poſſible, be free from the rottenneſs of ambition, pride, contention, and every evil work.

Pride, and a contempt of others, is often the parent of offences; and therefore the bleſſed Jeſus cautioned his diſciples, in the moſt ſolemn manner, to beware of that vice; aſſuring them that the meaneſt perſon is an object of the care of providence; and *that their angels do always behold the face of his heavenly father.* Our bleſſed Saviour did not mean by this expreſſion, that every man who practiſes the duties of religion, has a particular guardian angel aſſigned him; but as all angels are ſent forth miniſtring ſpirits, they may be called his angel.

And, to ſhew the immenſe care taken by his Almighty Father of the leaſt of his reaſonable creatures, and the great value he ſets upon the ſouls of the human race, our Saviour told them, that he not only gave his higheſt angels charge concerning them, but had alſo ſent his only begotten Son, to ſeek and to ſave that which was loſt: and would ſhare in the joy which the heavenly beings are filled with on their recovery. *How think ye, if a man have an hundred ſheep, and one of them be gone aſtray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and ſeeketh that which is gone aſtray? and if ſo be that he finds it, verily I ſay unto you, he rejoiceth more of that ſheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not aſtray:*

aſtray: even ſo it is not the will of my heavenly father, that one of theſe little ones ſhould periſh, Matt. xviii. 12, 13, 14.

After having ſpoken theſe things to the offending party, he turned himſelf towards his diſciples, and gave them inſtructions with regard to the offended. *If thy brother ſhall treſpaſs againſt thee, Go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he ſhall hear thee, thou haſt gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witneſſes every word may be eſtabliſhed. And if he ſhall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the Church: but if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican*, Matt. xviii. 15, 16, 17.

Uſe every method in thy power to make thy brother ſenſible of his fault; and in order to this, repreſent it to him privately. If this rebuke have the deſired effect, thou haſt brought him back to the paths which lead to happineſs: but, if this gentle method fail, two or more grave perſons ſhould join in the rebuke, that he may be convinced of the injury he has done thee. If he ſtill remains obſtinate, tell his offence to the Church, whoſe ſentence will ſufficiently ſhew that thou haſt done thy duty, and that he alone is to blame. But if he is ſo hardened as not to be affected by the cenſure of the Church, he is from thenceforth to be treated as the Phariſees treat the heathens and Publicans; namely, as an incorrigible ſinner, whoſe company and converſation being contagious, ought to be ſhunned by all who have any love for virtue and religion.

Our Saviour had formerly honoured Peter with the power of *binding and looſing*, which he now conferred on all his diſciples. *Verily, I ſay unto you, whatſoever ye ſhall bind on earth ſhall be bound in heaven: and whatſoever ye ſhall loſe on earth ſhall be looſed in heaven*, Matt. xviii. 18. That is, if by your admonition either public or private you can bring your brethren to repentance, they are looſed from their ſins, the fetters with which they are bound by divine juſtice.

But, on the other hand, if the offending brother continues impenitent after all the methods above deſcribed are tried, his guilt is bound the faſter upon him; becauſe, by the precepts of the Goſpel, none but penitents can obtain pardon.

Our bleſſed Saviour alſo added, as an encouragement to good men, that if they continued earneſt in their endeavours to bring ſinners to repentance, and offered up their prayers to the Almighty for aſſiſtance, he would always grant their petitions, provided they were agreeable to the wiſe ends of his providence. *Again I ſay unto you, that if two of you on earth ſhall agree on earth, as touching any thing that they ſhall aſk, it ſhall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midſt of them*, Matt. xviii. 19, 20.

Peter had before heard his maſter ſpeak of the doctrine of frequent forgiveneſs, and imagined that what he had now ſo ſtrongly inculcated might prove dangerous to ſociety; and

and therefore thought it his duty to offer his objections. *Lord*, ſaid he, *how oft ſhall my brother ſin againſt me, and I forgive him, till ſeven times?* He thought it a ſtrange doctrine which obliged him to forgive offences ſeven times repeated; but our bleſſed Saviour told him, that he was very greatly miſtaken; that he never intended to limit forgiveneſs to ſeven times, but that it ought be extended even to ſeventy times ſeven.

This excellent morality he illuſtrated by the parable of the two ſervants, debtor to one lord; in order to ſhew the neceſſity of forgiving the greateſt injuries in every caſe where the offending party is ſenſible of his fault, and promiſes amendment; becauſe, on this condition alone, our heavenly father will forgive our offences. *Therefore*, ſaid the bleſſed Jeſus, *is the kingdom of heaven likened to a certain king, that would take account of his ſervants.* God is the great king and ſovereign of all creatures, and all are accountable to him, as ſervants to a maſter. He will reckon with all; and happy are they who live ſenſible of this important truth. When he had begun to reckon, one ſervant was brought unto him who owed him an immenſe debt, *ten thouſand talents*, a debt much greater than he was able to pay. His lord therefore commanded him, agreeable to the cuſtom of thoſe times, to be ſold for a ſlave, and *his wife and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.*

The ſervant, convinced of the juſtice of the ſentence, and knowing he had nothing to hope for, but from the mercy and clemency of his lord, fell down in the moſt humble manner, and importunately beſought him, ſaying, *Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.* The maſter, moved with compaſſion towards him, accepted of his humiliation: and, to make his happineſs complete, looſed him from the ſentence inflicted, and freely forgave him the enormous debt: an obligation ſurely ſufficient to have melted the hardeſt heart into gratitude towards his Lord, and the tendereſt ſympathy towards any of his brethren in diſtreſs. But, alas! who is acquainted with the human heart? This very ſervant went out from the preſence of his compaſſionate lord, and found one of his fellow-ſervants who owed him an *hundred pence:* a poor inconſiderable debt in compariſon of what he himſelf owed his lord.

But behold the baſe inhumanity of this ſervant: he laid hands on the poor debtor, ſeizing him violently by the throat, and ſaying, *Pay me that thou oweſt.* His fellow-ſervant fell down at his feet, even as he had juſt before done at the feet of his lord, and beſought him in the very ſame words he himſelf had ſo lately uſed, *Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.* Such a ſimilarity of circumſtances one would ſurely have thought muſt have affected his ſtony heart, brought to remembrance his own late diſtreſs, and melted his ſoul into the like generous compaſſion which had flowed ſo ſweetly from his lord to him. But his conduct was the very reverſe; he would have

have no patience, he would ſhew no pity: he went and caſt the unhappy debtor into priſon, till he ſhould pay the debt.

His fellow-ſervants, when they ſaw what was done, were exceedingly afflicted, and came and told their lord the whole tranſaction. Upon which he ſummoned the unmerciful ſervant to appear before him; and, filled with indignation and abhorrence, ſaid unto him, O thou wicked ſervant, how perverſe is thy behaviour, how ungrateful and baſe thy proceeding! *I forgave thee all that debt*, that enormous debt thou owedſt me, *becauſe thou deſiredſt me*: I was moved to clemency and compaſſion by thy intreaties and diſtreſs, and *ſhouldſt not thou alſo have had compaſſion on thy fellow-ſervant, even as I had pity on thee?* Shouldſt not thou much rather have forgiven him, who was thy fellow-ſervant, and owed thee ſo ſmall a ſum, when I thy king and lord had forgiven thee ſo immenſe a debt?

Having thus expoſtulated with him his wrath was kindled, and he *delivered him to the tormentors till he ſhould pay all that was due unto him. So likewiſe*, added the Son of God, *ſhall my heavenly father do alſo unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not one another your treſpaſſes*, Matt. xviii. 34, 35. And ſurely this awful threatning ought to ſtrike the minds of fierce and implacable men with terror. For whatever they may think, it will certainly, in its full extent, be inflicted upon all who refuſe to obey the dictates of divine mercy, and forgive not only their fellow-ſervants, but every brother in Chriſt ſuch petty treſpaſſes as they may happen to commit againſt them, but being afterwards ſenſible of their fault, make reparation, and promiſe amendment.

CHAP. XVIII.

Jeſus goes up from Galilee to Jeruſalem, to celebrate the fourth paſſover. Preaches in the temple at the feaſt of tabernacles. Is in danger of being apprehended by the Scribes and Phariſees. Delivers the woman taken in adultery. And eſcapes miraculouſly from the Jews.

OUR bleſſed Saviour, having delivered theſe doctrines, departed into Judea, paſſing through the country beyond Jordan, that the Jews who inhabited theſe diſtant parts might enjoy the unſpeakable benefits of his diſcourſes and miracles. And after ſowing the ſeeds of eternal life, and publiſhing the glad tidings of ſalvation in theſe remote countries, repaired to Jeruſalem to celebrate the fourth paſſover; but the malignity of the Scribes and Phariſees was ſo great, that he ſtayed but a ſhort time in the capital; and then returned into Galilee, where the multitude again reſorted to him, and he again inſtructed them in the paths that lead to everlaſting life.

The feaſt of tabernacles now drew on, at which all the males of the Jewiſh nation capable of travelling, repaired to Jeruſalem, and dwelt in tabernacles or booths, made of the boughs of trees, in commemoration

moration of their fathers having had no other habitations, during their forty years ſojourning in the Wilderneſs. To this feaſt ſome of the kinſmen of the bleſſed Jeſus deſired he would accompany them, and there ſhew himſelf openly to the whole nation of the Jews. They did not themſelves believe that he was the great prophet ſo long expected; and therefore condemned the method he purſued in his public miniſtry as altogether abſurd. They could not conceive what reaſons he had for ſpending ſo much of his time in the deſerts, and remote corners of the kingdom, while he pretended to ſo public a character as that of the Redeemer of Iſrael. Jeruſalem, the ſeat of power, was, in their opinion, much the propereſt place for him to deliver his doctrines, and work his miracles in the moſt public manner poſſible, before the great and learned men of the nation, whoſe deciſion in his favour would have great weight in increaſing the number of his diſciples, and inducing the whole nation to own them for the Meſſiah. *Depart hence and go into Judea, that thy diſciples alſo may ſee the works that thou doeſt. For there is no man that doeth any thing in ſecret, and he himſelf ſeeketh to be known openly: if thou doeſt theſe things, ſhew thyſelf to the world. For neither did his brethren believe on him*, John vii. 3, 4, 5.

But Jeſus was no ſtranger to the inhabitants of Jeruſalem; and therefore did not think proper to reſide among them any longer than was abſolutely neceſſary. They had more than once attempted his life, and therefore very little hopes remained that they would believe his miracles, or embrace his doctrine; but, on the contrary, the greateſt reaſon to think they would deſtroy him, if poſſible, before he had finiſhed the work, for which he aſſumed the veil of human nature, and reſided among the ſons of men. *My time*, ſaid the bleſſed Jeſus to theſe unbelieving relations, *is not yet come: but your time is always ready. The world cannot hate you, but me it hateth, becauſe I teſtify of it, that the works thereof are evil. Go ye up unto this feaſt: I go not yet up unto this feaſt, for my time is not yet full come*, John vii. 6, 7, 8. As if he had ſaid, it is not proper for me to go before the feaſt begins; but you may retire to the capital whenever you pleaſe: the Jews are your friends, you have done nothing to diſpleaſe them; but the purity of the doctrines I have preached to them, and the freedom with which I have reproved their hypocriſy, and other enormous crimes, have provoked their malice to the utmoſt height: and therefore as the time of my ſufferings is not yet come, it is not prudent for me to go ſo ſoon to Jeruſalem.

There was alſo another reaſon why our bleſſed Saviour refuſed to accompany theſe relations to the feaſt of tabernacles; the roads were crowded with people, and theſe gathering round him, and accompanying him to Jeruſalem, would doubtleſs have given freſh offence to his enemies, and have in a great meaſure prevented his miracles and doctrines from having

having the desired effect. He therefore chose to continue in Galilee, till the crowd were gone up to Jerusalem, when he followed, *as it were in secret*, neither preaching nor working miracles by the way; so that no crowd attended him to the feast.

As Jesus did not go up openly to Jerusalem, so neither did he, on his arrival, repair to the temple, and there preach openly to the people. This gave occasion to several disputes among the Jews with regard to his character. Some affirmed that he was a true prophet; and that his absenting himself from the feast could be owing only to accident: while others as confidently asserted, that he only deceived the people, and paid no regard to the institutions they had received from heaven.

But about the middle of the feast, Jesus appeared openly in the temple, and taught the people; delivering his doctrines with such strength of reason and elegance of expression, that his very enemies were astonished, knowing that he had never enjoyed the advantage of a learned education. *Now about the midst of the feast, Jesus went up into the temple and taught. And the Jews marvelled, saying, how knoweth this man letters, having never learned?* To which the great Redeemer of mankind replied, my doctrine was not produced by human wisdom; the sages of the world were not my instructors; I received it from heaven, it is the doctrine of the Almighty, whose messenger I am. *My doctrine is not mine but his that sent me*, John vii. 16.

Nor can he who is desirous of practising the doctrines I deliver, if he will lay aside his prejudices, and sincerely endeavour to tread the paths of virtue, be at a loss to know from whom my doctrines are derived; because he will easily discern whether they are conformable to the principles of virtue. It is no difficulty to discover an impostor, because all his precepts will tend to advance his own interest, and gratify his pride. Whereas all the doctrines delivered by a true prophet have no other end than the glory of God, however contrary they may prove to himself. *He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory, but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him*, John vii. 18.

Some of the Jews called Jesus a false prophet, because he had healed on the Sabbath the impotent man in one of the porches of Bethesda, which they pretended was a violation of the law of Moses, and consequently, what no prophet would be guilty of. In answer to which, our blessed Saviour told them, that however they might pretend to reverence the authority of Moses and his law, they made no scruple of violating the most sacred of his precepts: they had resolved to put him to death directly, contrary to every law of God, and man; and, in order to execute their detestible scheme, were laying plots against his life.

The people replied, *Thou hast a devil, who goeth about to kill thee.* To which Jesus answered, I have done a miracle of an extraordinary

kind on the Sabbath-day, which you think inconſiſtent with the character of a pious man; and therefore, wonder how I could perform it. But ſurely, Moſes gave you the law of circumciſion, and you make no ſcruple of performing the ceremony on the Sabbath-day, becauſe it is a precept both of Moſes and the fathers. Since, therefore, ye think yourſelves bound to diſpenſe with the ſtrict obſervance of the Sabbath, in order to perform a ceremonial precept; can you be angry with me, becauſe, in order to fulfil the great end of all the divine laws, I have cured a man who was infirm in all his members, and even with far leſs bodily labour than you perform the ceremony of circumciſion? Conſider, therefore, the nature of the thing; diveſt yourſelves of your prejudices, and the ſuperſtitious opinions taught by your elders, and judge impartially. *Moſes therefore gave you circumciſion, (not becauſe it is of Moſes, but the fathers) and ye on the Sabbath-day circumciſe a man. If a man on the Sabbath-day receive circumciſion, that the law of Moſes ſhould not be broken, are ye angry at me, becauſe I made a man every whit whole on the Sabbath-day? Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment*, John vii. 22, 23, 24.

Tho' this argument was irrefragable, yet ſeveral of our bleſſed Saviour's inveterate enemies asked, with a ſarcaſtical ſurprize, if the boldneſs of Jeſus, and the ſilence of the rulers, proceeded from their being convinced that he was the Meſſiah! and at the ſame time, to deride his pretenſions to that high character, ſaid, that they were acquainted both with his parents and relations; but that no man, when Chriſt appeared, would be able to tell from whence he came, founding their opinion on theſe words of the prophet Iſaiah, *Who can declare his generation?* Iſa. liii. 8. To which the bleſſed Jeſus anſwered, that their knowing his parents and relations was no reaſon againſt his having the prophetical characters of the Meſſiah. Adding, I am not come of myſelf, but ſent from heaven by God, who has uttered nothing by his ſervants the prophets concerning the Meſſiah, but what is true, and will all be fulfilled in me; but ye are totally ignorant of his glorious perfections, and gracious counſels, and have no inclination to obey his juſt commands. You are really ignorant of what the prophets have delivered concerning the Meſſiah; for, had you underſtood their predictions, you would have known, that one of his principal characters is to underſtand the perfections and will of God more fully, and explain them to the ſons of men more clearly, than any other meſſenger ever before ſent from the Moſt High. And would you attentively conſider the doctrines I deliver, you would ſoon perceive this character remarkably fulfilled in me, and be convinced that I came from the Almighty God of Jacob.

This defence, however powerful, and his reaſons however ſolid, were far from diſarming his enemies of their malice; for ſome of them were deſirous of apprehending him: but providence would not ſuffer any to

lay hands on him, becauſe the time of his ſufferings was not yet come. Many of the people, however, convinced by the powerful miracle he had lately wrought, and the unanſwerable reaſons he had advanced in ſupport of his character, believed on him, and affirmed publickly in the temple, that he was the Meſſiah. *And many of the people believed on him, and ſaid, when Chriſt cometh, will he do more miracles than theſe which this man hath done?* John vii. 31.

The Scribes and Phariſees were highly provoked at this attachment of the common people to Jeſus; and accordingly, on the laſt and great day of the feaſt, they met in council, and ſent ſeveral officers to apprehend him, and bring him before them. Jeſus, during theſe tranſactions in the council, continued in the temple teaching the people. My miniſtry, ſaid he to the multitude, is drawing near its period; and therefore you ſhould, during the ſhort time it has to laſt, be very careful to improve every opportunity of hearing the word; you ſhould liſten with the greateſt attention to every diſcourſe, that your minds may be ſtored with the truths of the Almighty, before I return to my father; for after my departure, you ſhall earneſtly wiſh for the ſame opportunities of ſeeing me, and hearing my inſtructions, but ſhall never obtain them. *Yet a little while I am with you, and then I go unto him that ſent me. Ye ſhall ſeek me, and ſhall not find me: and where I am thither ye cannot come,* John vii. 33, 34.

The Jews, who did not underſtand that our bleſſed Saviour alluded to his own death, reſurrection and aſcenſion to the right hand of the majeſty on high, whither their ſins would not permit them to follow him, wondered at this doctrine, and imagined, that he intended to leave Judea, and preach to their brethren diſperſed among the Gentiles. But this ſuppoſition was not ſufficient: becauſe, if he did go and preach among the Gentiles, they thought it was not impoſſible for them to follow him thither. *Then ſaid the Jews among themſelves, whither will he go, that we ſhall not find him? Will he go unto the diſperſed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles? What manner of ſaying is this that he ſaid, ye ſhall ſeek me and ſhall not find me: and where I am thither ye cannot come,* John vii. 35, 36.

While the Saviour of the world was thus preaching to the people in the temple, the water from Siloam was brought into the temple, according to the appointment of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, part of which they drank with loud acclamations, in commemoration of the mercy ſhewed to their fathers, who were relieved by a ſtream which miraculouſly flowed from a rock, and relieved a whole nation, then ready to periſh with thirſt in an arid and ſandy waſte; and the other part they poured out as a drink-offering to the Almighty, accompanying it with their prayers, for the former or latter rain to fall in its ſeaſon; the whole congregation ſinging the following paſſage, *With joy ſhall ye draw water out of the wells of ſalvation,* Iſaiah xii. 3.

It was the cuſtom of the bleſſed

Jeſus

ſeſus to deliver moral inſtructions in alluſion to any occurrences that happened; and accordingly took this opportunity of inviting in the moſt affectionate manner all who were deſirous of knowledge or happineſs, to come to him and drink, alluding to the ceremony they were then performing. And, to encourage all ſuch as were deſirous of believing in him, he promiſed them the gifts of the holy ſpirit, which he repreſented under the ſimilitude of a river flowing out of their belly. *In the laſt day, that great day of the feaſt, Jeſus ſtood and cried, ſaying, if any man thirſt, let him come to me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the ſcripture hath ſaid, out of his belly ſhall flow rivers of living water*, John vii. 37, 38.

While Jeſus was thus ſpeaking to the people, the officers from the council came to apprehend him; but hearing that the topic he was diſcuſſing was a very ſingular one, and he ſeemed to deliver his diſcourſe with remarkable fervour, their curioſity induced them to liſten ſome time to his diſcourſe before they laid hands on him. But the eloquent manner in which he delivered his ſubject melted away their rage; the ſweetneſs of his pronounciation, and the plainneſs and perſpicuity of this diſcourſe elucidated the beauties of truth, and cauſed them to ſhine before the underſtanding, with their native luſtre. Accordingly his very enemies, who were come from the council on purpoſe to apprehend him, were aſtoniſhed; the greatneſs of the ſubject, made as it were viſible by the divine ſpeaker, filled their underſtandings; the warmth and tenderneſs with which he delivered himſelf penetrated their hearts; they felt new and uncommon emotions, and being overwhelmed with the greatneſs of their admiration, were fixed in ſilence and aſtoniſhment; condemning themſelves for having undertaken the office, and ſoon returned to the rulers of Iſrael without performing it.

Had the bleſſed Jeſus pleaded for his life before the officers of the council who were ſent to apprehend him, the ſucceſs of his eloquence, even in that caſe, had been truly wonderful; but in the caſe before us, it was ſurely ſuperior to all praiſe: for, in a diſcourſe addreſſed to others, and even on a ſpiritual ſubject, it diſarmed a band of inveterate enemies, and made them his friends.

Nor were the officers the only perſons on whoſe hearts this diſcourſe made a very remarkable impreſſion; for many of them declared that he muſt be one of the old prophets; and others, that he was no other than the Meſſiah himſelf. Some, however, led away with the common miſtake, that he was born at Nazareth, asked, with diſdain, if the Meſſiah was to come out of Galilee? And whether they would acknowledge a Galilean for the Meſſiah, when the ſcripture had abſolutely declared, that he was to be born in Bethlehem, the native town of his father David? *Many of the people therefore, when they heard this ſaying, ſaid, of a truth this is the prophet.*

prophet. Others ſaid, this is the Chriſt. But ſome ſaid, ſhall Chriſt come out of Galilee? Hath not the ſcripture ſaid, That Chriſt cometh of the ſeed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was? John vii. 40, 41, 42.

This diſpute was carried to ſo great a height, that ſome of his enemies knowing that the officers were ſent to apprehend him, threatened to lay hands on Jeſus; but the Almighty would not ſuffer them to execute their wicked deſign. *And ſome of them would have taken him; but no man laid hands on him,* John vii. 44.

The officers now returned to the council, and were aſked why they had not brought Jeſus of Nazareth, whom they were ſent to apprehend? To which the officers anſwered, *Never man ſpake like this man.* This reply enraged the council, who reviled them for preſuming to entertain a favourable opinion of one whom they had pronounced an impoſtor. It is ſtrange, ſaid they, that you, who are not ignorant of our ſentiments concerning this perſon, ſhould entertain a favourable idea of him. Have any perſons of rank, or celebrated for their knowledge of the laws, believed on him? Are not his followers the very dregs of the people who are totally ignorant of all the prophecies concerning the Meſſiah?

The officers made no anſwer to theſe raiſing accuſations of their maſters; but Nicodemus, a member of the council, arraigned their conduct in a very poignant manner. "Does our law (ſays he) condemn "any man before he has been "heard?" They had before condemned their officers for being ignorant of the law, when it appeared they were themſelves far more ignorant, in pretending to condemn a perſon before they had proved him guilty. They were acting directly contrary to the fundamental principles of the law of equity, at the time they boaſted of their profound knowledge of its precepts.

This ſharp reproof of Nicodemus ſo highly exaſperated them, that they aſked him, with an air of diſdain and ſurprize, if he was alſo one of thoſe mean perſons who had joined together to ſupport the pretences of a Galilean though the ſcriptures had plainly ſaid, that Bethlehem was the place of the Meſſiah's nativity? Adding, that if he refuſed to liſten to them, he ſhould ſearch the ſacred writings, and he would ſoon be convinced that the great prophet mentioned by Moſes was not to be born in Galilee. *Art thou alſo of Galilee? Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariſeth no prophet,* John vii. 52.

After making this anſwer to Nicodemus, the council broke up, and Jeſus, who well knew their malicious intentions, retired to the mount of Olives, where he ſpent the night with his diſciples.

The next morning early he returned to the temple, and again taught the people. The Scribes and Phariſees now determined to render him odious to the multitude, or obnoxious to the Roman governor.

Accordingly they placed before him a woman that had been taken in the act of adultery, desiring his opinion what punishment she ought to suffer. *This woman*, said they to Jesus, *was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?* John viii. 4, 5.

Had Jesus declared against stoning the adulteress, they would doubtless have represented him to the multitude as a person who contradicted Moses, and favoured adultery; which could not have failed of rendering him odious to the people. On the other hand, had he ordered her to be stoned, it would have afforded a plausible pretence for accusing him to the Roman governor, as a person who stirred up the people to rebellion, the Romans having now taken the power of life and death into their own hands.

But Jesus, who well knew their malicious intentions, made them no answer, but *stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as tho' he heard them not*, John viii. 6.

They, however, still continued pressing him to give an answer; and, at last, Jesus, in allusion to the law which ordered that the hands of the witnesses by whose testimony an idolater was convicted, should be first upon him, said, *He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.* Let those who are remarkably zealous for having justice executed upon others, at least, take care to purify themselves from all heinous crimes.

This reply had its desired effect. The hypocritical Scribes and Pharisees were convicted of sin by their own consciences; so that they immediately retired, fearing Jesus would have made their particular sins publick. *And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last*, John viii. 9.

The woman's accusers being all retired, Jesus told her, that as no man had pronounced sentence of death upon her, neither would he pronounce it; but advised her to be very careful for the future to avoid the temptations which had induced her to commit so black a crime.

I cannot help remarking here, that the wisdom, knowledge, and power of our blessed Saviour, were eminently displayed on this occasion: his wisdom in defending himself against the malicious attempts of his enemies; his knowledge in discovering the secrets of their hearts; and his power, in making use of their own consciences to render their artful intentions abortive. It was, therefore, with remarkable propriety, that the great Redeemer of mankind, now called himself the *light of the world*: as if he had said, I am the spiritual sun, that dispels the darkness of ignorance and superstition, in which the minds of men are immersed, and enlightens the path that leads to eternal life; nor shall any who follows me ever be involved in darkness. *I am the light of the world: he that followeth me, shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life*, John viii. 12.

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This declaration of the bleſſed Jeſus highly provoked the Phariſees, who told him he muſt be a deceiver, becauſe he boaſted of himſelf. To which the great Redeemer of mankind replied, You are not to imagine that I called myſelf the light of the world from a principle of pride and falſhood: that title juſtly belongs to me; nor would you yourſelves refuſe to acknowledge it, did you know from what authority I received my commiſſion, and to whom, when I have executed it, I muſt return. But theſe things ye are totally ignorant of; and, therefore, judge according to outward appearances, and condemn me becauſe I do not deſtroy thoſe who oppoſe me, as you vainly think the Meſſiah will do thoſe who ſhall refuſe to ſubmit to his authority. But the deſign of the Meſſiah's coming is very different from your miſtaken notions: he is not to deſtroy but to ſave the children of men. *Though I bear record of myſelf, yet my record is true: for I know whence I came, and whither I go; ye cannot tell whence I come and whither I go. Ye judge after the fleſh, I judge no man*, John viii. 14, 15. He added, that if he ſhould condemn any perſon for unbelief, the condemnation would be juſt; becauſe his miſſion was true, being confirmed by his own teſtimony, and that of his Almighty Father, the God of Jacob, by whoſe authority, and agreeable to whoſe will, all his ſentences would be paſſed. *And yet if I judge, my judgment is true; for I am not alone, but I and the father that ſent me*, John viii. 16.

Having thus vindicated his own character, and ſhewn that his judgment was juſt, he proceeded to inform them that the Father himſelf bare witneſs to the truth of his miſſion. You cannot, ſaid he, juſtly complain, even if I ſhould puniſh you for your unbelief, becauſe you are, by your own laws, commanded to believe the teſtimony of two witneſſes, that my miſſion evidently is true. For the actions of my life, which are perfectly agreeable to the character of a meſſenger from heaven, bare ſufficient witneſs of me; and the Father, by the miracles he has enabled me to perform, beareth witneſs of me: ye are therefore altogether culpable in objecting to my miſſion. *It is alſo written in your law, that the teſtimony of two men is true. I am one that bear witneſs of myſelf, and the Father that ſent me beareth witneſs of me*, John viii. 17, 18.

The Jews then aſked him, Where is thy Father, the other witneſs to whom thou appealeſt? Jeſus replied, Your conduct ſufficiently demonſtrates that ye are ſtrangers both to me and my Father; for had ye known who I am, you muſt have always known whom it is I call my Father: had ye been convinced that I am the Meſſiah, you muſt alſo have been convinced that the Father is no other than that Omnipotent Being who created and upholds all things, by the word of his power. *Then ſaid they unto him, where is thy Father?*

ther? Jeſus anſwered, Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye ſhould have known my Father alſo, John viii. 19.

This diſcourſe the Evangeliſt tells us was held in the treaſury, or court of the women, where the cheſts were placed for receiving the offerings of all who came up to worſhip in the temple; and muſt therefore have been a place of great reſort, being frequented by all, even the prieſts and rulers. But, notwithſtanding the public manner in which our bleſſed Saviour now aſſerted his claim to the character of the Meſſiah, no man attempted to ſeize him; Providence not ſuffering them to put their malicious deſigns in execution, becauſe his *hour*, or time of his ſufferings, *was not yet come*.

After this diſcourſe was finiſhed, Jeſus again repeated what he had before told them; namely, that he ſhould ſhortly depart from them; and that they ſhould then ſeek him, but not be able to find him. *I go my way, and ye ſhall ſeek me, and ſhall die in your ſins: whither I go, ye cannot come*, John viii. 21. As if he had ſaid, After my aſcenſion into heaven, when the Roman armies ſhall ſpread horror and deſolation in every corner of the land, ye ſhall then earneſtly wiſh for the coming of the Meſſiah, in expectation of being delivered by his powerful arm from your cruel enemy: but ye ſhall then find your miſtake, you ſhall die in your ſins, and be for ever excluded from the manſions of happineſs.

The Jews, however, were far from underſtanding what our bleſſed Saviour meant by his going from them. They even fancied he would deſtroy himſelf, becauſe they thought the only retreat where they could not find him was the gloomy habitation of the grave. To which the bleſſed Jeſus replied, Your vile inſinuation betrays at once the wickedneſs of your hearts, and the baſeneſs of your original. Ye are from the earth, and therefore obnoxious to all the evil paſſions that infeſt human nature, and from the dictates of your own hearts, you fancy that I can be capable of committing the horrid crime of ſelf murder. But my extraction is very different; it is from heaven, and conſequently my mind is not tainted with the corruption of human nature, the ſource of temptation to every ſin. You therefore muſt believe that I am the *bread of life*, the heavenly manna, the light of the word, the true Meſſiah, if you are deſirous of being cleanſed from thoſe pollutions which flow from your earthly origin; but if ye ſtill continue in your unbelief, *you ſhall die in your ſins*.

The Jews now, in order to vindicate themſelves, demanded what ſort of perſon he pretended to be? To which Jeſus anſwered, *Even the ſame that I ſaid unto you from the beginning*, that is, at the beginning of this diſcourſe, *the light of the world*. Adding, *I have many things to ſay, and to judge of you: but he that ſent me is true, and I ſpeak to the world thoſe things which I have heard of him*, John viii. 26.

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This diſcourſe, however plain it may appear, was not underſtood by the ſtupid Jews; they did not perceive *that he ſpoke to them of the Father.* But Jeſus told them, that when they had crucified him, they would be convinced, by the miracles accompanying that awful hour, the reſurrection from the dead, the effuſion of the holy ſpirit on his diſciples, and the deſtruction of the Jewiſh nation, who he was, and the Father that ſent him. *When ye have lift up the Son of man, then ſhall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myſelf; but as my Father hath taught me, I ſpeak theſe things,* John viii. 28. He added, that tho' he ſhould be crucified as a malefactor, that puniſhment would not be inflicted on him, as a conſequence of his being deſerted by his Father; becauſe he would never leave him in any period of his miſery, or even at the hour of death, as he had always acted agreeable to his will.

As he ſpake theſe words, many of the people believed him to be the Meſſiah. Perhaps by *lifting him up,* they did not underſtand his crucifixion, but his aſcenſion to the throne of David; and hence ſuppoſed, that he now entertained ſentiments worthy of the Meſſiah, and were therefore very ready to acknowledge him as ſuch; and believe the doctrine he had delivered, concerning his miſſion. But Jeſus told them, that if they perſevered in the belief and practice of his word, they ſhould in reality become his diſciples, have a title to that honourable appellation, be fully inſtructed in every doctrine of the Goſpel, and be not only freed from the ſlavery of ſin and its conſequences, but alſo from the ceremonial laws delivered by Moſes. *If ye continue in my word, then are ye my diſciples indeed; and ye ſhall know the truth, and the truth ſhall make you free,* John viii. 31, 32.

The Jews on hearing him mention that they ſhould be made free, anſwered, *We be Abraham's ſeed, and were never in bondage to any man.* This aſſertion, if taken literally, was abſolutely falſe; the whole nation at that very time, being in bondage to the Romans: nor were their anceſtors any ſtrangers to ſlavery, having ſeverely felt the hand of tyranny, both in Egypt, Aſſyria, and Babylon. The expreſſion, therefore, muſt be taken in a metaphorical ſenſe, to ſignify ſpiritual bondage: it was a freedom by truth, a freedom in reſpect of religion which they now aſſerted. They meant that they were the deſcendants of illuſtrious anceſtors; and during the worſt of times, had preſerved ſentiments in religion and government worthy of the poſterity of Abraham; nor had the hotteſt perſecution of the Aſſyrian kings been able to compel them to embrace the religion of the heathens. In reſpect of truth, *we were never in bondage to any man: how ſayeſt thou, ye ſhall be made free?*

In anſwer to this queſtion, Jeſus told them, that they who give themſelves up to a vicious courſe of life, and to the gratification of their ſinful appetites, were abſolutely ſlaves, and how far they might deſerve that ap-

appellation, it was incumbent on them to conſider. *Verily, verily I ſay unto you, whoſoever committeth ſin is the ſervant of ſin.* And as a ſlave cannot be aſſured of the continuance of his maſter's favour, or certain of abiding continually in the family, ſo my Father can, when he pleaſes, diſcard ſuch habitual ſinners, deprive you of the external œconomy of religion, in which you ſo highly boaſt, as you have through ſin rendered yourſelves bond-men to his juſtice. If ye are deſirous of becoming the children of God, and of remaining for ever in his family, you muſt ſubmit to the authority of his Son, and embrace his doctrine; which will induce him to adopt you as co heirs with himſelf. It is he only that can make you free indeed, and place you in the city of the heavenly Jeruſalem, without the leaſt danger of being removed. I well know that ye are, in a natural ſenſe, the ſeed of Abraham, but in a moral one, the offspring of Satan; for many of you are deſirous of deſtroying me, becauſe I enjoin a greater degree of ſanctity than you are willing to acquire. *I know that ye are Abraham's ſeed; but ye ſeek to kill me, becauſe my word hath no place in you. I ſpeak that which I have ſeen with my Father: and ye do that which you have ſeen with your Father. They anſwered and ſaid unto him, Abraham is our Father,* John vii. 37, 38, 39.

In anſwer to this, Jeſus told them that if they were the ſpiritual progeny of Abraham, they would reſemble that great and good man in his righteouſneſs; and therefore, inſtead of endeavouring to take away the life of a perſon who came with a revelation from God, they would believe on him, in imitation of Abraham, who was juſtly ſtiled the Father of the faithful, and the friend of God. *If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye ſeek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham,* John viii. 39, 40. Jeſus added, that their deeds ſufficiently ſhewed whoſe children they were, and from what ſtock they were deſcended; even from the great deceiver of mankind, who *goeth about like a roaring lion, ſeeking whom he may devour.*

The Jews now perceived that Jeſus did not mean natural but ſpiritual lineage; and accordingly replied, that they were undoubtedly in that ſenſe the children of God, as they were certainly not born of fornication; alluding to the marriage-covenant, which in ſcripture is metaphorically ſaid to ſubſiſt between God and the people of Iſrael, and by which their obligation to love, honour, and obey him, was repreſented in a very lively manner. We are neither, ſaid the Jews, idolaters ourſelves, nor ſprung from idolatrous parents; conſequently we are, doubtleſs, with reſpect to a ſpiritual deſcent, the children of God. *We be not born of fornication; we have one father, even God,* John viii. 41.

But Jeſus told them, that an outward profeſſion of the true religion, was of no conſequence. They muſt *love it in deed and in truth,* if they hoped to be in reality, the children of God: and

and if they truly loved religion, they must love him who came down from heaven on purpose to reveal it to the sons of men. Adding, that he did not come of himself, but was sent by the great creator of the universe. *If God were your father, you would love me: for I proceeded forth, and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me,* John viii. 42.

But ye, continued the blessed Jesus, inherit the nature of your father the devil; and therefore will continue to gratify the lusts ye have derived from him. He was an enemy and a murderer of mankind from the beginning, and has ever since exerted his whole power to work their destruction; sometimes by seducing into sin by his falsities, and sometimes by instigating them to kill those whom God thought proper to send to reclaim them. And having early departed from holiness and truth, a habit of lying is become habitual to him. Being therefore a liar, and the father of lying, when he speaketh a falsity he speaketh what is properly his own. But I tell you the truth; and therefore it is natural to think that ye will disbelieve me. *Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do: he was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not,* John viii. 44, 45.

But though ye refuse your assent, are any of you able to shew that I have not received my commission from heaven, or that I have done any thing that has a tendency to render me unworthy of belief? Can you shew that I have taught false doctrine, reproved you unjustly for your actions, or been guilty myself of sin? If you are unable to do this, but, on the contrary, must acknowledge, that my doctrine and life are such as become a messenger of God, what reason can ye pretend for not believing me? *And if,* in affirming that I am perfectly free from sin, *I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?* Whoever is of God, receives, with the greatest humility, whatever revelations God is pleased to make of himself by his messengers, and makes it his study and delight to obey all his commandments. But ye reject the revelations and precepts of the Almighty, delivered by me who came down from heaven, for no other reason than because ye are not the children of God. *He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God,* John viii. 47.

The Jews replied, that his calling the descendants of Abraham the children of the devil was a sufficient proof, that he was either a very profligate wretch himself, or instigated by some evil spirit. But Jesus told them that he was neither mad, nor actuated by an evil spirit. On the contrary, he honoured his Father by speaking the words of truth, which he had sent him to deliver; and, therefore,

therefore, they diſhonoured him in calling him by ſo opprobrious a title. Adding, that he did not, however, court their applauſe, nor fear their reproaches; though there was one concerned to vindicate his honour, and ſeverely puniſh all who ſhould dare to attack it.

Having thus juſtified his character, the bleſſed Jeſus told them, that whoever obeyed his precepts ſhould never feel the pangs of eternal death. *Verily, verily, I ſay unto you, if a man keep my ſaying he ſhall never ſee death*, John viii. 51. On this declaration the Jews cried out, now we ſufficiently know that thou art poſſeſſed with a devil; for the moſt righteous perſons that ever flouriſhed among the ſons of men are dead; Abraham, and the prophets, and other holy men, are all laid in the chambers of the duſt, and yet thou haſt the impudence and folly to affirm, that whoever keeps thy precepts ſhall never die. Thou ſurely canſt not think nor pretend to be more in favour with the Almighty than Abraham and the prophets were, who, though the ſtricteſt obſervers of the divine precepts, could not obtain the privilege of being themſelves exempt from the ſtroke of death, much leſs for their followers. *Now we know that thou haſt a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets, and thou ſayeſt, If a man keep my ſaying he ſhall never taſte of death. Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? and the prophets are dead: whom makeſt thou thyſelf?* John viii. 52, 53.

To this objection Jeſus anſwered, if I ſhould attempt to ſpeak in praiſe of myſelf, you would call it vain and fooliſh; and like the Phariſees tell me, *Thou beareſt record of thyſelf: thy record is not true.* Inſtead therefore of giving you a full deſcription of my dignity, I ſhall only inform you, that it is my Father who ſpeaketh honourable of me, by the many miracles he enables me to perform. And ſurely this may be ſufficient to convince you of what I have promiſed for my diſciples; eſpecially when I tell you, that my Father is no other than the Almighty God of Jacob, whom all the deſcendants of Abraham pretend to worſhip. But tho' you vainly boaſt of worſhipping my Father as your God, you are ignorant of him: you neither form juſt conceptions of him, nor worſhip him in the manner you ought. Your knowledge and actions, therefore, give a lie to your profeſſion: But on the contrary, I entertain proper ideas of him, and obey his precepts. You may, perhaps, conſtrue this declaration as proceeding from vanity; but if I ſhould ſay I do not form adequate conceptions of him, or acknowledge him as he deſerves, I ſhould be a liar like unto you. Even your father Abraham, of whom you ſo highly boaſt, earneſtly deſired to behold the time when I, the promiſed ſeed, ſhould put on the veil of human nature, and convert all the nations of the world from their idolatry to the knowledge and worſhip of the true God. He earneſtly deſired to ſee the great tranſactions of my life, by which this invaluable bleſſing was to be procured

for all the ſons of men; and view the happy ſtate of all nations, when this bleſſing was beſtowed upon them. This was granted him; he *ſaw it and was glad.* He was favoured with the raviſhing proſpect of theſe happy times, then concealed in the womb of futurity, and was exceedingly tranſported with the ſcene. *Your father Abraham rejoiced to ſee my day: and he ſaw it, and was glad,* John viii. 56.

The Jews underſtanding theſe words in a natural ſenſe, concluded that he had affirmed that he was before Abraham; and knowing he was not yet fifty years old conſidered it as abſolutely ridiculous. They had no conception of his divine nature, though he had ſo often told them he was the Son of God, and conſequently exiſted with the Father, long before this world was called from its primitive chaos. This groſs ſtupidity and perverſeneſs induced the Saviour of the world to aſſert his dignity in ſtill plainer terms: *Verily, verily I ſay unto you, before Abraham was, I am,* John viii. 58.

This declaration ſo provoked the Jews, that they ruſhed on him, and attempted to ſtone him; but Jeſus, by rendering himſelf inviſible, paſſed unhurt through the crowd, and retired out of the temple.

CHAP. XIX.

Jeſus reſtores a man to ſight that was born blind. Sends out his ſeventy diſciples. Goes into Judea; and delivers the parable of the good Samaritan

AS our bleſſed Saviour was retiring from the brutal attempts of the Jews, he ſaw in one of the ſtreets of the city a man who had been blind from his birth. The ſight of ſo affecting an object could not fail to excite the compaſſion of the benevolent Saviour of mankind. Nor could the affronts and indignities he had juſt received from the Jews hinder him from *working the works of him that ſent him,* and diſpenſing bleſſings on that rebellious and ungrateful nation. Accordingly he beheld this poor blind man, not with a tranſient view, but fixed on him the eyes of his divine compaſſion, and already prevented him with the riches of his adorable love.

The diſciples remarking their Lord's attention to this object of compaſſion, and probably imagining that he was going to extend his uſual mercy to this unfortunate object, aſked their maſter, whether his blindneſs was occaſioned by his own ſin or the ſin of his parents? They had often heard their maſter ſay that afflictions were commonly the puniſhment of particular ſins; and had learned from the law of Moſes, that ſin was the fruitful ſource of evil; and that the Lord puniſhed the iniquities of the fathers upon the children. Their maſter kindly anſwered, that neither his own nor the ſins of his parents were the immediate cauſe of this peculiar puniſhment; but that he was born blind, *that the works of God ſhould be made manifeſt in him*; particularly his ſovereignty in bringing him blind into the world, his power in conferring the faculty of ſight upon him, and his goodneſs in bearing witneſs

to the doctrine by which men are to be ſaved.

By this reply our bleſſed Saviour has taught us, that a curious enquiry into the afflictions of other men may be ſafely avoided; and that we ought to ſuppoſe every calamity ſubſervient to the glory of Omnipotence; never imputing to their perſonal ſins whatever miſeries we behold in others, leſt, like the diſciples in the preſent caſe, we aſſign to ſin what owes its origin to the glory of our Maker.

Our bleſſed Saviour having declared the cauſe of this perſon's blindneſs, namely, *that the works of God ſhould be made manifeſt in him*, added, *I muſt work the work of him that ſent me, while it is day; the night cometh, when no man can work.* Intimating to his diſciples and all the ſons of men, his unwearied labour in the work of his Almighty Father. In this he was occupied day and night, during the time of his ſojourning in the fleſh. To this alone he directed all his thoughts, and all his intentions. This he eſteemed even as his meat and drink; and for this he ſuffered the neglect of his ordinary food, that he might finiſh the bleſſed, the beneficent work of human ſalvation. A work, to accompliſh which, he left the courts of heaven; and, during the execution of it, went about doing good.

It was now the ſabbath-day, and the bleſſed Jeſus was going to perform a miracle, in which there was to be a ſmall degree of ſervile work; and therefore he told his diſciples, that they need not be ſurpriſed to ſee him work miracles of that kind on the ſabbath-day. For tho' they ſhould imagine that he might defer them till the day of reſt was over, his time on earth was ſo ſhort, that he was obliged to embrace every opportunity that offered of working miracles. Perhaps, he choſe to perform this work on the ſabbath, becauſe he knew the Phariſees would, for that reaſon, enquire into it with the utmoſt attention, and conſequently render it more generally known.

But however this be, our bleſſed Saviour, who was now going to confer ſight on one that was born blind, took occaſion from thence to ſpeak of himſelf as one appointed to give light alſo to the minds of men involved in darkneſs. *As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.*

Hence we learn that our Saviour's miracles were deſign'd not only as proofs of his miſſion, but alſo as ſpecimens of the power he poſſeſſed as the Meſſiah. For example, by feeding the multitude with the meat that periſhed, he ſignified that he was come to quicken and nouriſh mankind with the *bread of life*, that ſovereign cordial, and ſalutary nutriment of the ſoul. His giving ſight to the blind was a lively emblem of the efficacy of his doctrine to illuminate the blinded underſtandings of men. His healing their bodies repreſented his power to heal their ſouls, and was a ſpecimen of his authority to forgive ſins, as it was a real though a partial removal of its puniſhment. His caſting out devils was an earneſt of his final victory over Satan, and all his powers. His

raiſing

raiſing particular perſons from the dead was the begining of his triumph over death, and a demonſtration of his ability to accompliſh a general reſurrection; and in a word, his curing all promiſcuouſly who applied to him, ſhewed, that he was come, not to condemn the world, but to ſave even the chief of ſinners. Accordingly at, or ſoon after, performing theſe miracles, when the memory of them was freſh in the minds of his hearers, we often find him turning his diſcourſe to the ſpiritual things they repreſented. But to return from this digreſſion.

Our bleſſed Saviour having intimated that he was the light of the world, *He ſpat on the ground, and made clay of the ſpittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and ſaid unto him, Go waſh in the pool of Siloam (which is by interpretation, Sent) He went his way therefore, and waſhed, and came ſeeing*, John ix. 6, 7.

There is no doubt but our bleſſed Saviour could as eaſily have performed this miracle without the aſſiſtance of any external means. Indeed, thoſe the great Redeemer of mankind made uſe of on this occaſion, were ſo far from being likely to effect the cure, that they ſeem properly adapted to produce a quite contrary effect. We muſt, therefore, conclude that they were intended to direct our attention to higher myſteries, and ſhew us, as in a glaſs, that it is no other than the ſame divine perſon, who at firſt created man out of the duſt of the earth, and gave ſight to his eyes, that now reſtores and regenerates lapſed mankind, and opens the eyes cloſed with the black cement of ſin.

In all probability, this perſon was no ſtranger to our bleſſed Saviour, or at leaſt was informed by ſome perſon near him, who Jeſus was, the fame of whoſe miracles had been publiſhed in every corner of Judea. Indeed we cannot otherwiſe account for the implicit and ready obedience paid him by the blind man, who was ſo amply rewarded for his faith and confidence, by receiving the invaluable gift of ſight.

So wonderful an event could not fail of producing a general curioſity and ſurprize, and induced thoſe who had ſeen this blind man in his dark and deplorable condition to be very particular in their enquiries into the means of ſo ſingular a miracle. It was doubtleſs the ſubject of general converſation; and, it is natural to think, ſhould alſo have proved the means of a general converſion: but, as too frequently happens, a perverſe curioſity prevented its ſalutary effects upon their ſouls. Unbelief, and hardneſs of heart, led ſome of them even to doubt of the plaineſt fact; a fact the moſt evident and indiſputable, and plainly the work of the divinity, led others to perſecute at once both the object and the author of it! *The neighbours therefore, and they which before had ſeen him, that he was blind, ſaid, Is this he that ſat and begged? Some ſaid, This is he; others ſaid, He is like him: but he ſaid, I am he*, John ix. 8, 9.

His heart glowed with gratitude, he was full of joy: and therefore

perceiving his neighbours to doubt of the identity of his perſon, he proclaimed himſelf to be the very ſame, whom they lately ſaw begging in total darkneſs. I am he, thus wonderfully bleſt with ſight, by the peculiar mercy of the Almighty! I am he who was blind from my birth, whom ye have all ſeen, and many relieved in my miſerable diſtreſs! I am he who was even from my mother's womb, involved in pitchy darkneſs, but now enjoy the enlivening light of day!

On hearing ſo frank and full a declaration, they were curious to know how this admirable effect was produced. *How were thine eyes opened?* To this queſtion he readily applied, *A man that is called Jeſus, made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and ſaid unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam and waſh: and I went and waſhed, and I received ſight*, John ix. 11. They then aſked him where the perſon was, who had performed ſo ſtupendous a work? to which the man anſwered, *I know not*: For Jeſus had retired while the man went to waſh his eyes in the pool of Siloam, probably to avoid the applauſes which would naturally have been given him, and which we ſee through the whole Goſpel he generally ſtudied to avoid.

The neighbours, either ſtimulated by envy, or excited by a deſire of having the truth of this extraordinary event ſearched to the bottom, brought the man before the council as the proper judges of this affair. Accordingly, he was no ſooner placed before the aſſembly, than the Phariſees began to queſtion him, *how he had recovered his ſight?* Nothing daunted by this aweful aſſembly, though terrible to a man of his mean circumſtances, he boldly anſwered, *He put clay upon mine eyes, and I waſhed, and do ſee*, John ix. 15.

On hearing this account of the miracle, the Phariſees declared that the author of it muſt be an impoſtor, becauſe he had, by performing it, violated the ſabbath-day. But others, more candid in their way of thinking, gave it as their opinion, that no deceiver could poſſibly work a miracle of that kind, becauſe it was too great and beneficial for any evil being to have either the inclination or power to perform.

The court being thus divided in their opinion with regard to the character of Jeſus, they aſked the man himſelf what he thought of the perſon who had conferred on him the bleſſing of ſight? To which he boldly and plainly anſwered, *He is a prophet*. But the Jews hoping to prove the whole a cheat, ſtarted another objection, namely, that this perſon was not born blind, though all his neighbours had already teſtified the truth of it. Accordingly, they called his parents, and asked them, Whether he was their ſon; if he had been born blind; and by what means he had obtained his ſight? To which they anſwered, that he was truly their ſon, and had been born blind; but with regard to the manner in which he received his ſight, and the perſon who had conferred it on him, they could give no information: their ſon was of age, and he ſhould anſwer for himſelf. *Theſe words ſpake*

his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confeſs that Jeſus was the Chriſt, he ſhould be put out of the ſynagogue, John ix. 22.

In this inſtance we ſee, how powerfully fear can act on the conſciences, and ſtop the tongues of men; the parents of this blind man well knew by what means their ſon had received his ſight; and like him they ſhould have gloried in the divine hand that had wrought ſo marvellous a work, and dared to have confeſſed him before all men, whatever dangers might have threatened them. Let us learn from hence, to fear our own, and to pity human frailty, and to implore the aſſiſtance of the holy ſpirit, to give us courage and reſolution in the day of trial: and let us take care, not to love the praiſe of men more than the praiſe of God.

The Phariſees finding that all attempts, either to diſcredit or diſprove the fact uſeleſs, had recourſe to their uſual method of calumniating the author of it. They called again *the man that was born blind, and ſaid unto him, give God the praiſe: we know that this man is a ſinner*, John ix. 24. To which the man boldly anſwered theſe rulers of Iſrael, *Whether he be a ſinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I ſee*, John ix. 25.

This anſwer was not ſufficient to ſatisfy the Phariſees; they were deſirous of confounding him with repeated queſtions, and the art of ſophiſtry, and accordingly aſked him, *What did he to thee? How opened he thine eyes?* They had before aſked theſe queſtions, but now propoſed them a ſecond time, in order that the man, by repeating his account of the ſervile work performed at the cure, might become ſenſible that Jeſus had thereby violated the ſabbath, and conſequently muſt be an impoſtor. Thus the enemies of our dear Redeemer would gladly have prevailed on the perſon who had received the invaluable gift of ſight, to join with them in the judgment they paſſed on the great perſon who had wrought ſo ſtupendous a miracle. But their obſtinacy in denying the truth appeared ſo criminal to him, that he boldly anſwered, *I have told you already, and you did not hear: wherefore would you hear it again? will ye alſo be his diſciples?* John ix. 27.

This anſwer raiſed the indignation of the council to the utmoſt height. *They reviled him, and ſaid, thou art his diſciple; but we are Moſes diſciples. We know that God ſpake unto Moſes: as for this fellow, we know not whence he is*, John ix. 28, 29.

This increaſed the beggar's wonder and confidence, and he replied, It is very ſtrange that you ſhould not acknowledge the divine miſſion of a teacher who performs ſuch aſtoniſhing miracles; for common ſenſe ſufficiently declares, that God never aſſiſts impoſtors in working miracles: and accordingly there cannot a ſingle example be found, ſince the creation of the world, of any ſuch perſon's opening the eyes of one born blind. My opinion therefore is, that if this man had not been ſent by God, he could not work any miracle at all. *The man anſwered, and ſaid unto them, why*

why, herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes. Now we know that God heareth not ſinners: but if any man be a worſhipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth. Since the world began, was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing, John ix. 30, *&c.*

Such was the plain and powerful reaſoning of this poor man, and founded upon truths they could not deny. They all owned that *God heareth not ſinners*: they all knew that God had heard Jeſus, by the miracle he had wrought, which was a fact proved beyond any poſſibility of doubt, and was ſuch as never man performed: it therefore undeniably followed, that Jeſus was not a ſinner, but ſent from God, ſince otherwiſe he could do nothing.

The Phariſees were not ignorant that this argument was concluſive; they felt its whole force, and well knew that it could not be reſiſted. Accordingly they did not attempt to anſwer it, but had recourſe to puniſhment and abuſive language. Thou wicked, illiterate, impudent mortal, ſaid they, whoſe underſtanding is ſtill as blind as thy body lately was, and who waſt born under the heavieſt puniſhment of ſin, doſt thou pretend to inſtruct in a matter of this kind, the guides of the people, and thoſe who have rendered themſelves eminent for their knowledge in the law? *Thou waſt altogether born in ſin, and doſt thou teach us?*

Having vented their malice againſt him, in revilings, the Evangeliſt adds, that *they caſt him out.* That is, they paſſed on him the ſentence of excommunication, which was the higheſt puniſhment they had power to inflict. But tho' he was cut off from the Jewiſh ſociety, the Almighty thought proper to unite him to one, where no unjuſt ſentences can ever be paſt, nor any member be ever ſeparated during a joyful eternity.

From the whole of the Phariſees conduct, we ſhould learn to contemplate the various arts, and ſubtile endeavours of all the adverſaries and enemies of the goſpel, and croſs of Chriſt: and not be ſurpriſed to find them, though in different ſhapes, employed againſt ourſelves, if we zealouſly embrace the truth of Chriſt, as well as againſt all who are not afraid to confeſs before all men, the glory of him who hath opened their eyes. It is impoſſible that the world ſhould love thoſe who boldly declare that its works are evil. Let us not, therefore, be ſhaken when we come to experience it, but learn from this blind man, freely and openly to confeſs the faith, and to declare the power of that God, who hath brought us from darkneſs into his marvellous light, and turned our feet into the way of peace.

Soon after our bleſſed Saviour had wrought this miracle on the blind man, the feaſt of dedication drew near. This ſolemnity was not appointed by Moſes, but by that heroic reformer, Judas Maccabeus, in commemoration of his having cleanſed the temple, and reſtored its worſhip, after

after both had been polluted by Antiochus Epiphanes.

But notwithſtanding this feaſt was of human inſtitution, Jeſus determined to be preſent at it, even tho' he knew that further attempts would be made againſt his life. His public miniſtry was indeed now drawing near its period; and therefore the bleſſed Jeſus would not omit any opportunity of preaching to the loſt ſheep of the houſe of Iſrael, and of doing good to the children of men. Nor did he now, as he had formerly done, travel privately to the capital, but openly declared his intention of going to Jeruſalem, and ſet forwards on his journey with great courage and reſolution.

The road from Galilee to Jeruſalem lay through Samaria, the inhabitants of which entertained the moſt inveterate hatred againſt all who worſhiped in Jeruſalem. Jeſus being no ſtranger to this diſpoſition of the Samaritans, thought proper to ſend meſſengers before him, that they might, againſt his arrival, find reception for him in one of the villages: but the inhabitants being informed that the intention of his journey was, to worſhip in the temple at Jeruſalem, refuſed to receive either him, or his diſciples, into their houſes.

The meſſengers being thus diſappointed, returned to Jeſus, and gave him an account of all that had paſſed; at which James and John were ſo exceedingly incenſed, that they propoſed to their maſter to call for fire from heaven, in order to deſtroy ſuch unhoſpitable wretches; alledging, in excuſe for ſuch violent proceedings, the example of the prophet Elijah. *Lord, wilt thou, that we command fire to come down from heaven, and conſume them, even as Elias did?* Luke ix. 54.

But the bleſſed Jeſus, whoſe meekneſs on all occaſions was without example, ſharply rebuked them, for entertaining ſo unbecoming a reſentment for this offence. *Ye know not*, ſaid he, *what manner of ſpirit ye are of.* You are ignorant of the ſinfulneſs of the diſpoſition ye have now expreſſed; nor do ye conſider the difference of times, perſons, and diſpenſations. The ſeverity exerciſed by Elijah, on the men who came from Ahab, to apprehend him, was a juſt reproof to an idolatrous king and people; very proper for the times, and very agreeable to the characters, both of the prophet who gave it, and of the offenders to whom it was given; and, at the ſame time, not unſuitable to the Moſaic diſpenſation. But that the goſpel breathed a very different ſpirit; and the intention of the Meſſiah's coming into the world was not to deſtroy, but to ſave the lives of the children of men.

Behold here, ye mortals who pretend to deſpiſe the doctrines of the goſpel, an inſtance of patience under a real and unprovoked injury, which you cannot parallel among all your boaſted heroes of antiquity! An inſtance of patience which expreſſed infinite ſweetneſs of diſpoſition, and ſhould be imitated by all the human race, eſpecially by thoſe who call themſelves the diſciples of Chriſt.

But

Being denied reception, by the inhoſpitable inhabitants of this Samaritan village, Jeſus, attended by his diſciples, directed their way towards another; and as they travelled, a certain man ſaid to him, *Lord, I will follow thee, whitherſoever thou goeſt.* But Jeſus, to whom the ſecret purpoſes of all hearts were open, knowing he only deſired to poſſeſs the riches and honours of the Meſſiah's kingdom, thought proper to make him ſenſible of his miſtake: and accordingly ſaid to him, *Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have neſts, but the ſon of man hath not where to lay his head,* Luke ix. 59. I am ſo far from boaſting of a temporal kingdom, and the power and pomp attending it, that I have not even the accommodations provided by nature for the beaſts of the field and the fowls of the air. They have ſafe and ſecure retreats; but the ſon of man is deſtitute of an habitation.

Soon after, our bleſſed Saviour met with one who had formerly been his diſciple, and ordered him to diſengage himſelf from all worldly employments, and to follow him; but he was deſirous of excuſing himſelf for the preſent, under pretence, that he was bound by the ties of gratitude to continue with his aged father, till death had put a period to his exiſtence, and he had laid his remains in the ſepulchre of his anceſtors. *Lord,* ſaid he, *ſuffer me firſt to go and bury my father.* To which Jeſus anſwered, *Let the dead bury their dead; but go thou and preach the kingdom of God,* Luke ix. 60. Let thoſe that are immerſed in worldly affairs, follow the affairs of the world; but thoſe who have embraced the doctrines of the goſpel do every thing in their power to ſpread the glad tidings of ſalvation in every corner of the earth.

A third perſon offered to follow him, provided he would give him the liberty to return to his houſe, and take leave of his family: but Jeſus told him, that he ſhould not ſuffer any domeſtic affairs to interfere with the care of his ſalvation; that the calls of religion were too preſſing to admit of the leaſt delay or excuſe whatever; and that all who ſet themſelves to ſeek the welfare of their ſouls, ſhould purſue the work aſſiduouſly, without looking careleſsly around them, as if they were regardleſs of the work they had undertaken to perform. *No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God,* Luke ix. 62.

As our bleſſed Saviour's miniſtry was from this time, till its final period, to be confined to Judea, and the countries beyond Jordan, it was neceſſary that ſome harbingers ſhould be ſent into every town and village he was to viſit, to prepare his way. Accordingly he called his ſeventy diſciples unto him, and after inſtructing them in the duties of their miſſion, and the particulars they were to obſerve in their journey, he ſent them into different parts of the country, to thoſe particular places whither he himſelf intended to follow them, and preach the doctrines of the goſpel to the inhabitants.

The reaſon aſſigned by the bleſſed Jeſus

Jeſus, for ſending theſe diſciples on this important meſſage, was the ſame with that he had before aſſigned for the miſſion of the twelve. The harveſt was plenteous in Judea and Perea, as well as in Galilee, and the labourers alſo few; and being never more to preach in Chorazin, Bethſaida, and Capernaum, the cities wherein he had uſually reſided, he could not help reflecting on the reception he himſelf had met with from the inhabitants of thoſe cities. He foreſaw the terrible conſequences that would flow from their rejecting his doctrine, and the many kind offers he had made them. He was grieved for their obſtinacy; and in the overflowing tenderneſs of his ſoul, he lamented the hardneſs of their hearts. *Wo*, ſaid he, *unto thee Chorazin, wo unto thee Bethſaida: for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, ſitting in ſackcloth and aſhes. But it ſhall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment, than for you. And thou Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, ſhalt be thruſt down to hell*, Luke x. 13, 14, 15. To which our bleſſed Saviour added, as ſome conſolation to his diſciples, *He that heareth you, heareth me: and he that deſpiſeth you, deſpiſeth me: and he that deſpiſeth me, deſpiſeth him that ſent me*, Luke x. 16.

This affectionate declaration could not fail of comforting the ſeventy, under the ill uſage they expected to meet with during the courſe of their miſſion. They well knew, that the preaching of Chriſt himſelf had been often deſpiſed, and often unſucceſsful, with reſpect to many of his hearers; and, therefore, they had not the leaſt reaſon to expect that they ſhould find a more welcome reception than their maſter.

The ſeventy diſciples having received their inſtructions, and the power of working miracles from the Meſſiah, departed to execute their important commiſſion in the cities and villages of Judea and Perea. And after viſiting the ſeveral places, publiſhing the glad tidings of ſalvation, and working many miracles in confirmation of their miſſion, they returned to their maſter with great joy, ſaying; *Lord, even the devils are ſubject to us through thy name!*

It ſeems natural to think, from this expreſſion, that they did not imagine, when they firſt ſet out, that their power extended ſo far as to caſt out devils; and were pleaſingly ſurpriſed to find the apoſtate ſpirits tremble at their command. To which their great maſter replied, *I beheld Satan as lightening fall from heaven.* You will be no longer aſtoniſhed that the devils are ſubject to the power I have given you, when I tell you that their prince is not able to ſtand before me: and, accordingly, when I firſt put on the veil of human nature, to deſtroy him and his works, I ſaw him, with the ſwiftneſs of the lightning's flaſh, fall from heaven. Adding, in order to increaſe their joy, and prove that he had really caſt Satan down from the ſeats of heaven, that he would enlarge their power. *Behold*, ſays he, *I give unto you power to tread on ſerpents and ſcor-*

pions: and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing ſhall by any means hurt you, Luke x. 19.

At the ſame time he told them, that they had leſs reaſon to rejoice at the power they had received, as that was only a temporal pre-eminence, than at their names being written in the book of life. *Notwithſtanding, in this rejoice not, that the ſpirits are ſubject unto you; but rather rejoice, becauſe your names are written in heaven*, Luke x. 20.

Nor could the bleſſed Jeſus reflect on the unſearchable wiſdom and goodneſs of the divine diſpenſations to mankind, without feeling extraordinary joy; ſo that his beneficent heart overflowed with ſtrains of gratitude: *I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou haſt hid theſe things from the wiſe and prudent, and haſt revealed them unto babes: even ſo Father, for ſo it ſeemed good in thy ſight*, Luke x. 21.

The diſciples being returned from their tour, Jeſus left Samaria, and retired into Judea, and in the way was met by a certain lawyer, or ſcribe, who being deſirous of knowing whether the doctrines preached by Jeſus, were the ſame with thoſe before delivered by Moſes; asked him, what he ſhould do to inherit eternal life? It is really amazing that any mortal ſhould ask a queſtion like this, with a view to tempt, not to be inſtructed! This was, however, the caſe; but the bleſſed Jeſus, tho' no ſtranger to the moſt ſecret thoughts of the heart, did not reply, as he had before done to the Phariſees, *Why tempteſt thou me, thou hypocrite?* He turned the ſcribe's weapons againſt himſelf: what, ſaid he, is written in the law, of which thou profeſſeſt thyſelf a teacher, *How readeſt thou?* That law will teach thee what thou muſt do to be ſaved: and happy will it be for thee, if thou complieſt with its precepts. The ſcribe anſwered, it is there written, *Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy ſoul, and with all thy ſtrength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyſelf*, Luke x. 27.

This reply gained the approbation of our Saviour, who ſaid to him, *Thou haſt anſwered right: this do, and thou ſhalt live.* Perform theſe commands, and thou haſt fulfilled the duties of an Iſraelite; for on theſe two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

But whoſe conſcience can acquit him of performing every part of theſe duties? The lawyer, who in all probability expected no ſuch anſwer, being conſcious of his defects, and, conſequently, of the impoſſibility of obtaining eternal life on theſe conditions, was willing, as the ſacred hiſtorian informs us, *to juſtify himſelf*; was willing to ſtifle the riſing ſuggeſtions of his own conſcience, and, at the ſame time, to make a ſhew of his own devotion; and in order to this, he ſaid to Jeſus, *And who is my neighbour?* A queſtion very natural to be asked by a bigotted Jew, whoſe narrow notions led him to deſpiſe all who were not of his own fold; all who were not the natural deſcendants of his father Abraham.

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The Good Samaritan. Luke X.

To correct ſuch narrow and ſelfiſh principles, open their hearts to a more generous and noble way of thinking, ſhew them the only foundation of true love, and the extenſive relation they, and all mankind ſtand in to each other, our Saviour delivered the following moſt beautiful and inſtructive parable.

A certain perſon in his journey from Jeruſalem to Jericho had the misfortune to fall into the hands of robbers; who, not content with taking his money, ſtript him of his raiment, beat him in a deplorable manner, and left him for dead. While he continued in this miſerable condition, utterly incapable of aſſiſting himſelf, a certain prieſt happened to travel the ſame road; *and when he ſaw him, he paſſed by on the other ſide. And likewiſe a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and paſſed by on the other ſide.* So little compaſſion had theſe miniſters of religion for a brother in the moſt deplorable circumſtances of diſtreſs, that they continued their journey, without offering to aſſiſt ſo miſerable an object, notwithſtanding their ſacred characters obliged them to perform, on every occaſion, the tender offices of charity and compaſſion. It was a brother, a deſcendant of Abraham in diſtreſs; and therefore thoſe hypocrites could offer no reaſons to palliate their inhumanity. Their ſtony hearts could behold the affecting object of an unfortunate Iſraelite, lying in the road naked and cruelly wounded, without being the leaſt affected with his diſtreſs.

But though the tender ſentiments of humanity were ſtrangers to the breaſts of theſe miniſters of religion, they glowed in the heart of a Samaritan, who, coming to the ſpot where this helpleſs object lay, ran to him, and though he found him to be a perſon of a different nation, and one who profeſſed a religion oppoſite to his own, yet the hatred which had been inſtilled into his mind from his earlieſt years, and every objection ariſing from the animoſity ſubſiſting between the Jews and Samaritans, were immediately ſilenced by the tender ſenſations of pity, awakened by the ſight of ſuch complicated diſtreſs; his bowels yearned towards the miſerable object; though a Jew, he flew to him, and aſiſted him in the moſt tender manner.

It was the cuſtom in theſe eaſtern countries for travellers to carry their proviſions with them; ſo that this compaſſionate Samaritan was enabled, though in the deſert, to give the wounded man a little wine to recruit his ſpirits. He alſo bound up his wounds, pouring into them wine and oil, placed him on his own beaſt, and walked himſelf on foot to ſupport him. In this manner, he conducted him to an inn, took care of him during the night; and in the morning, when buſineſs called him to purſue his journey, recommended him to the care of the hoſt, left what money he could ſpare, and deſired that nothing might be denied him, for whatever was expended he would repay at his return.

Having finiſhed the parable, Jeſus turned himſelf to the lawyer, and

asked

asked him, *Which now of these three, thinkest thou was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?* The lawyer, struck with the truth and evidence of the case, replied, without the least hesitation, *He that shewed mercy on him.* Upon which Jesus replied, *Go and do thou likewise.* Perform all the good actions in thy power, extend thy kindness to every one, who stands in need of thy assistance, whether he be an Israelite, an heathen, or a Samaritan. Consider every man as thy neighbour in respect to works of charity, and make no enquiry with regard to his country or religion, but only with regard to his circumstances.

If we consider this beautiful parable, we shall find that it is composed in the finest manner to work the conviction designed; so that the lawyer however desirous of considering those of the Jewish religion only as his neighbours, it was impossible for him to do it on this occasion. The Jews had long considered the favours of a Samaritan as a more detestable abomination than the eating swine's flesh; yet notwithstanding this prepossession, the lawyer was obliged to acknowledge that neither the priest, nor the levite, but the travelling Samaritan, by discharging the great office of humanity to the Jew in distress, was truly his neighbour; that the like humanity was due from any Israelite to a Samaritan in the like distressed circumstances; and consequently, that all men are neighbours, without any regard to country, kindred, language, or religion. Mankind are intimately connected, by their common wants, and their common weaknesses. Providence has formed them in such a manner, that they cannot subsist without the assistance of each other; and consequently the relation subsisting between them is as extensive as their natures, and their obligations to assist each other by mutual good offices as strong as the necessities of every individual. Our blessed Saviour has, therefore, by this admirable parable, recommended, in the most powerful manner, that universal benevolence so familiar in the mouths, but so foreign to the hearts, of many ignorant pretenders to religion and morality.

CHAP. XX.

Jesus lodges with Martha and Mary in Bethany. Meets at the feast of Dedication, the man who was born blind. Teaches his disciples to pray. And dines with the Pharisees a second time.

AFTER speaking this parable to the lawyer, Jesus continued his journey towards Jerusalem, in order to be present at the feast of Dedication; and in the evening came to the house of Martha and Mary, the sisters of Lazarus, at Bethany. Martha was desirous of expressing her regard for her divine guest, by providing for him and his disciples the best entertainment in her power. But her sister, who was of a more contemplative disposition, sat quietly at the feet of Jesus, listening

ing with the utmoſt attention to his doctrine. For the great Redeemer of mankind never omitted any opportunity of declaring the gracious offers of the Almighty and his unſpeakable love for the children of men. Martha, being greatly fatigued with the burthen of the ſervice, complained to Jeſus of the little care Mary took to aſſiſt her. *Lord, doſt thou not care that my ſiſter haſt left me to ſerve alone? Bid her therefore that ſhe help me*, Luke x. 40.

But Jeſus reproved Martha, for taking ſo much trouble to provide for him and his diſciples, and commended Mary for her attentive application to his doctrine. *Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful. And Mary hath choſen that good part, which ſhall not be taken away from her*, Luke x. 41, 42.

As ſoon as the feaſt of Dedication began, Jeſus repaired to Jeruſalem, where he was informed, that the beggar he had reſtored to ſight at the feaſt of tabernacles, was, by the council, caſt out of the Synagogue. This information excited the pity of the Son of God; and he reſolved to make him full amends for the injury he had ſuffered. It was not long before he met the ſuffering perſon, and ſaid to him, *Doſt thou believe on the Son of God? He anſwered and ſaid, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jeſus ſaid unto him, Thou haſt both ſeen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. And he ſaid, Lord, I believe. And he worſhipped him*, John ix. 35.

I have already obſerved, that the beggar was thoroughly convinced that the perſon who opened his eyes was a meſſenger from heaven; it is, therefore, no wonder that as ſoon as he knew that Jeſus was the perſon who had performed ſo great a work, he readily believed him to be the Son of God.

Jeſus, having thus convinced the beggar, that he was the Meſſiah, directed his diſcourſe to the people, and ſaid unto them, *For judgment I am come into this world: that they that ſee not, might ſee; and that they which ſee, might be made blind*, John ix. 39. The meaning of our Saviour, though he alluded to the blind man, was ſpiritual. He did not intend to repreſent the deſign of his coming, but the effect it would have on the minds of men; as it would demonſtrate what character and diſpoſition every perſon poſſeſſed. The humble, the docile, and the honeſt, though they were immerſed in the night of darkneſs, with regard to religion and the knowledge of the ſcriptures, ſhould be enlightened by his coming, as the blind man had enjoyed the invaluable gift of ſight from his hands: but thoſe who were wiſe, learned, and enlightened in their own opinion, ſhould appear in their true character, abſolutely ignorant, fooliſh, and blind.

The Phariſees, who happened to be preſent, when he ſpake theſe words to the people, imagined that he intended to throw a reflection on their ſect, which the common people, from their ſkill in the law, held in great veneration. Accordingly,

ly, they asked him, with diſdain, *Are we blind alſo?* Doſt thou place us, who are teachers and have taken ſuch pains to acquire the knowledge of the Scriptures, on a level with the vulgar? To which Jeſus anſwered, *If ye were blind, ye ſhould have no ſin: but now ye ſay, We ſee; therefore your ſin remaineth.* If ye had not enjoyed the faculties and opportunities of diſcerning the proofs of my miſſion, you might have been conſidered as blind. But as ye are ſuperior to the vulgar, in point of learning, and at the ſame time your hearts averſe from acknowlegding the truth, your enlightened underſtanding will only aggravate your guilt.

After reproving the Phariſees for wilfully ſhutting their eyes againſt the evidence of his miſſion, he continued the reproof, by deſcribing the characters of a true and a falſe teacher. It was our Lord's cuſtom always to allude to objects before him; and, being now in the outer-court of the temple, near the ſheep, which were there expoſed to ſale, for ſacrifice, he compared the teachers among the Jews to ſhepherds and the people to ſheep: a metaphor often uſed by the old prophets. He conſidered two kinds of bad ſhepherds or teachers; the one who, inſtead of entering in by the door to lead the flocks to the richeſt paſtures, entered ſome other way, with an intention only to kill, to ſteal, and to deſtroy: the other, who though they entered by the door to feed their flocks, with the diſpoſitions of hirelings, yet when the wolf appeared, they deſerted the ſheep, having no love for any but themſelves. By the former, he plainly alluded to the Phariſees, who had caſt the man born blind out of the ſynagogue; for no other reaſon, than becauſe he would not act contrary to the dictates of his conſcience, and agree with them in declaring Jeſus to be an impoſtor. But though they had caſt him out of their church, Chriſt received him into his, which is the true church, the ſpiritual incloſure, where the ſheep go in and out, and find paſture.

It ſhould be obſerved, that the ſheep which were brought to be ſold for offerings, were incloſed in little folds, within the outer-court of the temple; ſo that the ſhepherd himſelf could not enter till the porter had opened the door. And from this circumſtance the following parabolical diſcourſe may be eaſily underſtood. *Verily, verily I ſay unto you, he that entereth not by the door into the ſheep-fold, but climbeth up ſome other way, the ſame is a thief and a robber*, John x. 1. Believe me, that whoſoever in any age of the church aſſumed the office of a teacher, without a commiſſion from me, was a thief and a robber: and in the preſent age he is no better who aſſumes that office without my commiſſion, and particularly without believing on me. *But he that entereth in by the door, is the ſhepherd of the ſheep. To him the porter openeth, and the ſheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own ſheep by name, and leadeth them out: and when he putteth forth his own ſheep, he goeth before them, and the ſheep follow him:*

for

for they know his voice, John x. 2, 3, 4.

The moral meaning of this circumſtance is, that good men are obedient to the inſtructions of true and faithful teachers; and that the latter, in every caſe, ſhew them their duty with the greateſt plainneſs, not concealing it, becauſe it may be diſagreeable to their inclinations. On the contrary, *a ſtranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of ſtrangers*, John x. 5. The people of God will not hearken to impoſtors and falſe teachers, but flee from them, like ſheep from the voice of a ſtranger; for they can eaſily diſtinguiſh them from the meſſengers of God, by their fruits, their doctrines, and their lives.

Thus did the great Redeemer of mankind, by this inſtructive parabolical diſcourſe, explain to the Phariſees the difference between true and falſe teachers; but they being ignorant of his meaning, he added, by way of explication, *Verily, verily, I ſay unto you, I am the door of the ſheep.* I am not only the door, by which the ſhepherds muſt enter, but I am alſo the door of the ſheep; it is by me that men enter into the ſpiritual incloſure of the church. *All that ever came before me*; all thoſe, who in former times aſſumed the characters of teachers of religion, without commiſſion from me, are *thieves and robbers: but the ſheep did not hear them*, John x. 8.

I am the door, I only am he, who alone has the right of admitting men into the church of God: *By me, if any man enter, he ſhall be ſaved, and ſhall go in and out, and find paſture.* If any man believeth on me, he ſhall become a true member of the church of God upon earth; and ſhall, from time to time, receive ſuch inſtructions, as ſhall nouriſh his ſoul unto eternal life. Our bleſſed Saviour ſeems to change the image in the laſt particular; and, inſtead of the outer court of the temple where the ſheep were kept, repreſented an incloſure, where cattle were fed.

The thief cometh not, but for to ſteal, and to kill, and to deſtroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly, John x. 10. You may eaſily know that I am neither a thief nor a robber, by conſidering that the intention of ſuch is only to ſteal, to kill, and to deſtroy the flock. They aſſume the characters of teachers, who have received their commiſſions from heaven, for no other reaſon than to promote their own intereſt at the expence of the ſouls of men: but I am come merely to give you life, and even much more abundantly than it is given by Moſes in the diſpenſation of the Law.

Nor am I an hireling ſhepherd, appointed by the owner to take care of the flock: I am the good ſhepherd, promiſed by the prophets; the true proprietor of the ſheep. This is ſufficiently evident from my laying down my life for the ſafety of the flock. Whereas an hireling, who propoſes nothing but his own advantage, when he ſees the wolf approaching, deſerts the ſheep; becauſe, inſtead of loving the ſheep,

his whole care is for his own ſafety, and therefore will not expoſe himſelf to any danger on their account; ſo that the wolf, without reſiſtance tears ſome to pieces, and diſperſes the reſt. *I am the good ſhepherd: the good ſhepherd giveth his life for the ſheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the ſhepherd, whoſe own the ſheep are not, ſeeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the ſheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and ſcattereth the ſheep. The hireling fleeth, becauſe he is an hireling, and careth not for the ſheep*, John x. 11, 12, 13.

And as I am the good ſhepherd, and ſo earneſt in tending them, ſo I know every particular ſheep, am able to claim it in whoſe poſſeſſion ſoever it be, and know every thing relating to the ſheep. I know the circumſtances wherein they are placed, am well acquainted with their wants, and can judge what aſſiſtance they ſtand in need of. Beſides, I love them all with the greateſt ſincerity, and approve of their obedience to me, becauſe, though it be imperfect, it is ſincere. For they have juſt notions of my dignity and character; they know that I am their ſhepherd and Saviour ſent from God; and that I am able to feed them with knowledge, deliver them from the puniſhment of ſin, and beſtow on them eternal life, and procure them a place in the bliſsful manſions of my Father's kingdom. *I am the good ſhepherd, and know my ſheep, and am known of mine*, John x. 14.

And this mutual knowledge and love of each other, is like that ſubſiſting between me and my father. *As the Father knoweth me, even ſo know I the Father. And I lay down my life for the ſheep*, John x. 15. I will give a convincing proof of the love I bear the ſheep; I will lay down my life for them: an inſtance of regard that will never be given by any hireling.

But I have other ſheep beſides thoſe of the ſeed of Abraham; numbers of my flock are among the Gentiles. Theſe alſo I muſt bring into my church, and they ſhall know me, ſhall diſtinguiſh my voice from that of a ſtranger, and chearfully ſubmit to my laws. There ſhall be then but one viſible church, conſiſting of Jews and Gentiles, and one ſhepherd to feed and govern them; for the middle wall of partition ſhall be broken down. *And other ſheep I have, which are not of this fold: them alſo I muſt bring, and they ſhall hear my voice; and there ſhall be one fold, and one ſhepherd*, John x. 16.

And becauſe I lay down my life to ſave the world, therefore my heavenly Father loveth me. But tho' I lay down my life, I will take it again; for I will in due time riſe from the dead. I do not, however, either lay down my life, or riſe from the dead, without the appointment of the Almighty. I act in both according to the divine wiſdom, and agreeable to the will of my heavenly Father. *Therefore doth my Father love me, becauſe I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myſelf: I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment*

mandment I have received of my Father, John x, 17, 18.

This diſcourſe had different effects upon the minds of the Jews. Some of them cried out that he was mad, or poſſeſſed with a devil, and that it was the higheſt folly to hear him; while others, who judged more impartially of him and his doctrine, declared that his diſcourſes were not thoſe of a lunatic, nor his miracles the works of a devil; aſking thoſe who were enemies to Jeſus, if they imagined any devil was able to confer the faculty of ſight on one that was born blind? *There was a diviſion therefore again among the Jews, for theſe ſayings. And many of them ſaid, he hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him? Others ſaid, theſe are not the words of him that hath a devil: can a devil open the eyes of the blind?* John x. 19, 20, 21.

Soon after, as Jeſus was ſtanding in Solomon's porch, the Jews came to him, deſiring, that he would tell them plainly whether he was the expected Meſſiah or not? But Jeſus knowing that they did not aſk this queſtion for information, but to gain an opportunity of accuſing him to the Romans, as a ſeditious perſon, who endeavoured to deceive the people, by pretending to be the great Son of David, promiſed by the prophets, in order to uſurp the kingdom, told them, that they muſt form a judgment of him from his actions. *I told you, and ye believed not: the works I do in my Father's name, they bear witneſs of me. But ye believe not; becauſe ye are not of my ſheep, as I ſaid unto you*, John x. 25, 26. Your unbelief is entirely owing to your headſtrong tempers, being unwilling to receive the doctrine of the kingdom of heaven; becauſe you muſt then renounce all your fond hopes of temporal power and advantages. But, on the contrary, thoſe who are of a meek and humble diſpoſition, and their minds free from worldly paſſions, eaſily perceive the truth of my doctrine and miracles, and conſequently are readily diſpoſed to become my diſciples. Nor ſhall ſuch perſons loſe their reward; for I will willingly receive them, and make them partakers of eternal life in my Father's kingdom. And however aſſiduous malicious men may be in endeavouring to hinder men from believing on me, they ſhall never be able to effect their purpoſe, though aſſiſted by all the powers of darkneſs. For my heavenly Father, who hath given them to me, is far greater than them all; nor is any able to contend with him: and this powerful, this Almighty Being and I are one. *My ſheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life, and they ſhall never periſh, neither ſhall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all: and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one*, John x. 27, *&c.*

Theſe words ſo highly provoked the Jews, who conſidered them as blaſphemous, that they took up ſtones to caſt at him, in conformity to the law, which commands all blaſphemers to be ſtoned. But Jeſus asked them, which of the beneficent miracles

racles he had wrought, in confirmation of his miſſion, deſerved ſuch treatment? *Many good works have I ſhewed you from my Father; for which of theſe works do ye ſtone me?* As if he had ſaid, I have fed the hungry in the deſert, I have healed the lame, I have cleanſed the leapers, I have cured the ſick, I have given ſight to the blind, I have caſt out devils, and I have raiſed the dead: for which of theſe works are ye going to ſtone me? Do theſe miracles indicate that the author of them is an impoſtor? Or can you be ſo ſtupid as to think that the Almighty would ſuffer any perſon to perform ſuch works, with no other intention than to deceive the human race? The Jews anſwered, We are far from thinking that thou deſerveſt puniſhment for any good work thou haſt done in favour of the afflicted and diſtreſſed: the puniſhment is intended to chaſtiſe thee for thy blaſphemous ſpeeches; for thou, though a weak mortal, a being of a day, like ourſelves, arrogantly aſſumeſt the power and majeſty of the moſt High, and by claiming the incommunicable attributes of the Deity, makeſt thyſelf God. *For a good work we ſtone thee not; but for blaſphemy, and becauſe that thou being a man, makeſt thyſelf God*, John x. 33.

Jeſus replied, has not the ſcriptures expreſsly called thoſe *gods*, and the *ſons of God*, who were commiſſioned to govern God's people, on account of their high office, and the inſpiration of the ſpirit, which was, tho' ſparingly, beſtowed upon them; can you therefore impute to that perſon whom the Almighty hath ſanctified and ſent into the world to ſave loſt mankind, and pay the price of redemption for all the ſons of men; can you, I ſay, impute blaſphemy unto him, for taking on himſelf the title of the Son of God? If my own aſſertion be not ſufficient to convince you of my perſonal dignity, you muſt ſurely think that the many miracles I have wrought abundantly prove, that they are the works of the moſt High, as Omnipotence alone could perform them; and, therefore, that the Father and I are ſo united, that whatever I ſay or do is approved of by the Almighty. *Is it not written in your law, I ſaid ye are gods? If he called them gods upon whom the word of God came, and the ſcripture cannot be broken: ſay ye of him, whom the Father hath ſanctified, and ſent into the world, thou blaſphemeſt; becauſe I ſaid, I am the Son of God? If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him*, John x. 34, &c.

This defence, however, was ſo far from ſatisfying the Jews, that it rather tended to enrage them the more; and Jeſus ſeeing it was of no conſequence to reaſon with ſo head-ſtrong a people, rendered himſelf inviſible, and by that means eſcaped from them. *Therefore they ſought again to take him, but he eſcaped out of their hand*, John x. 39.

The feaſt of the Dedication being now over, Jeſus departed from Jeruſalem, and retired into the parts of

of Perea beyond Jordan. Here his miniſtry was attended with great ſucceſs; for the inhabitants of the country, remembering what had been told them by John the Baptiſt concerning Jeſus, and being ſenſible that the doctrine and miracles of our bleſſed Saviour, were fully equal to what the Baptiſt had foretold, firmly believed him to be the Meſſiah.

How long he continued in this country is uncertain; but if we follow the beſt critics, he remained here till he went into Judea, to raiſe Lazarus from the dead.

According to this ſuppoſition, which ſeems the moſt agreeable to reaſon, the inhabitants of theſe countries enjoyed the doctrine and miracles of the Son of God for a very conſiderable time. But however this be, the Evangeliſt tells us, that while he was executing his miniſtry beyond Jordan, he happened to pray publickly with ſuch fervency, that one of his diſciples, who was exceedingly affected both with the matter and manner of his addreſs, begged he would teach them to pray. *And it came to paſs, that as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceaſed, one of his diſciples ſaid unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John alſo taught his diſciples*, Luke xi. 1.

In all probability, this diſciple was not with Jeſus, in the beginning of his miniſtry, when he gave his hearers directions concerning their devotions; unleſs we will ſuppoſe, that he was ſo inattentive as to forget what his maſter then delivered. But as we have already explained this celebrated prayer, it will now be ſufficient to refer the reader to Chapter vi.

Soon after, our bleſſed Saviour happened to caſt out a devil, when ſome, who were preſent, aſcribed the miracle to Beelzebub. *And he was caſting out a devil and it was dumb; and it came to paſs, when the devil was gone out, the dumb ſpake, and the people wondered. But ſome of them ſaid he caſteth out devils by Beelzebub, the chief of the devils*, Luke xi. 14, 15. However ſtrange this argument may ſeem, and however weak and abſurd it muſt appear to impartial judges, yet it had a conſiderable effect on illiterate perſons, eſpecially on thoſe whoſe prejudices and intereſts it favoured. The Phariſees pretended, that as Jeſus had all along been at great pains to oppoſe the traditions which moſt of the teachers of that age conſidered as the eſſentials of religion, and the principal branches of piety, they concluded that he muſt be a very wicked perſon. They alſo ſuppoſed, that a falſe prophet had the power of working ſigns and wonders; and thence concluded, that our Saviour performed all his miracles by the aſſiſtance of evil ſpirits, with an intention to turn the people from the worſhip of the true God.

Another pretended reaſon for aſcribing his miracles to evil ſpirits was, that the demons themſelves, when they departed out of the perſons poſſeſſed, honoured him with the title of the Meſſiah. Theſe arguments, though ſo evidently founded on falſehood, contributed largely to the

the infidelity of the Jews; and however we may be ſurpriſed that ſuch weak reaſons ſhould have any effect, conſidering what multitudes were witneſſes of the many miracles the bleſſed Jeſus performed on the ſick of all ſorts, on the blind, the deaf, the dumb, the maimed, the lame, on paralytics, lunatics, dæmoniacs, and other miſerable objects; nay, on the dead, whom he raiſed again to life, on the winds and the ſeas; in a word on every part of nature, yet experience hath abundantly convinced us, that theſe and their own ſuperſtitious opinions fixed that headſtrong people in their infidelity.

But though part of the multitude were content with aſcribing this miracle to the power of evil ſpirits, others went ſtill farther, deſiring him to prove himſelf the Meſſiah, by giving them a ſign from heaven. But Jeſus, knowing their thoughts, refuſed to grant them this requeſt; telling them, that they were a wicked race of mortals, and diſcovered a very perverſe diſpoſition, by ſeeking, after ſo many miracles had been performed, a ſign from heaven; and therefore, that no greater ſign ſhould be given them than the ſign of the prophet Jonas. *This is an evil generation: they ſeek a ſign, and there ſhall no ſign be given it, but the ſign of Jonas the prophet*, Luke xiv. 29.

No man, added the Saviour of the word, *when he hath lighted a candle, putteth it into a ſecret place, neither under a buſhel, but on a candleſtick, that they who come in may ſee the light.* God hath lighted up the torch of reaſon in the human breaſt, that it may illuminate, like a lamp placed in the midſt of an apartment, all the faculties of the ſoul; and perform for it the ſame offices which the eye does for the body. It is therefore neceſſary, that reaſon be kept as free as poſſible from the influence of prejudice, pride, revenge, luſt, covetouſneſs, and other evil paſſions, which will prevent its luſtre, and turn the light, which it before darted on the faculties of the ſoul, into darkneſs. *The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is ſingle, thy whole body alſo is full of light: but when thine eye is evil, thy whole body alſo is full of darkneſs. Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkneſs*, Luke xi. 34, *&c.* Take care, therefore, that thy mind is ſo completely enlightened by reaſon, that the emanations of its light be not in the leaſt interrupted by any evil paſſion, or affection; that all the faculties of the ſoul may be as much enlightened and aſſiſted, as the members of the body are by the bright ſhining of a candle. *If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole ſhall be full of light, as when the bright ſhining of a candle doth give thee light*, Luke xi. 36.

Thus did our bleſſed Saviour prove the truth of his miſſion, againſt the cavils and ſophiſtical reaſonings of his malicious enemies. And when he had done ſpeaking, one of the Phariſees preſent deſired he would dine with him. The Redeemer of mankind accepted the invitation, though probably given with an inſidious deſign; accompanied the Phariſee

riſee to his houſe, and ſat down to meat, but without performing the ceremony of waſhing, obſerved by all the other gueſts. An omiſſion of this kind could not fail of ſurpriſing the Phariſee, as he had thereby ſhewn an open contempt of their traditions. Jeſus, who well knew the thoughts of this bigotted Phariſee, ſaid to him, Your ſect are remarkably careful to keep every thing clean that touches your food, leſt by eating it, your body ſhould be polluted; but take no pains to clean your minds from the pollutions of rapine, covetouſneſs, and wickedneſs. You muſt ſurely be convinced, that he who created the body formed alſo the ſoul; and can you imagine, that the Almighty, who requires purity of body, becauſe it is the work of his hands, will not alſo inſiſt upon a greater purity of ſoul, which is undoubtedly the far nobler part of human nature? Inſtead, therefore, of that ſcrupulous ſolicitude of waſhing your hands, when ye ſit down to meat, ye ſhould be careful to apply yourſelves to the great duty of charity: a duty, that will render it impoſſible for any external thing to defile you, but will be at all times acceptable to your Maker. *Now do ye Phariſees make clean the outſide of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedneſs. Ye fools, did not he that made that which is without, make that which is within alſo? but rather give alms of ſuch things as you have, and behold all things are clean unto you,* Luke xi. 39, *&c.*

The Phariſees, however, were of ſo ſtubborn a diſpoſition, that they could not be corrected by any inſtruction, however mild or perſuaſive; and therefore our bleſſed Saviour treated them, on this occaſion, with a kind and wholeſome ſeverity, denouncing againſt them the moſt dreadful woes, for regarding ſo zealouſly the ceremonial parts of religion, and at the ſame time utterly neglecting the precepts of morality. *Wo unto you Phariſees, for ye tythe mint, and rue, and all manner of herbs, and paſs over judgment and the love of God: theſe ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Wo unto ye Phariſees, for ye love the upper-moſt ſeats in the ſynagogues, and greetings in the markets. Wo unto you ſcribes and Phariſees, hypocrites; for ye are as graves that appear not, and the men that walk over them, are not aware of them,* Luke xi. 42, *&c.*

A certain lawyer, who ſat at the table, thinking that this rebuke, though levelled principally againſt the ſcribes and Phariſees, affected his order alſo, was greatly diſpleaſed. But our bleſſed Saviour, who had never any regard to the perſons of men, deſpiſed his reſentment, and told him freely, what he thought of their character. *We unto ye alſo, ye lawyers, for ye lade men with burdens, grievous to be borne, and ye yourſelves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers,* Luke xi. 48. You pervert, in a very erroneous manner, the interpretations of ſcripture, for no other reaſon than to favour the tradition of the elders, and by that means, lay ſo heavy a burden on the ſhoulders of the deſcendants of Ja-

cob, that neither you nor they will touch with one of their fingers.

The bleſſed Jeſus alſo condemned them for building the ſepulchres of the prophets, whom their fathers had murdered: becauſe they did not do it from the reſpect which they had for the memory of theſe holy men, but from a ſecret approbation of their fathers actions; as too evidently appeared from their whole conduct. *Wo unto you: for you build the ſepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. Truly ye bear witneſs, that ye allow the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and ye build their ſepulchres. Therefore alſo, ſaid the wiſdom of God, I will ſend them prophets and apoſtles, and ſome of them they ſhall ſlay and perſecute: that the blood of all the prophets, which was ſhed from the foundation of the world, might be required of this generation: from the blood of Abel, unto the blood of Zacharias, which periſhed between the altar and the temple; verily, I ſay unto you, it ſhall be required of this generation,* Luke xi. 47, *&c.*

The great Redeemer of mankind likewiſe condemned the lawyers for filling the minds of the people with notions founded on wrong interpretations of ſcripture, whereby they were prejudiced againſt the goſpel; not being contented with rejecting it themſelves, but took care to hinder others from receiving it. *Wo unto you, lawyers: for ye have taken away the key of knowledge; ye enter not in yourſelves; and them that were entering in ye hindred,* Luke xi. 52.

Theſe ſevere diſcourſes highly provoked the Phariſee and his gueſts. They were conſcious of being guilty of the crimes laid to their charge, but unwilling that the people ſhould think them guilty: and therefore, out of revenge, urged him to ſpeak on a variety of topics, hoping they ſhould be able by that means to find occaſion of rendering him obnoxious, either to the government, or the multitude. *And as he ſaid theſe things unto them, the ſcribes and Phariſees began to urge him vehemently, and to provoke him to ſpeak of many things; laying wait for him, and ſeeking to catch ſomething out of his mouth, that they might accuſe him,* Luke xi. 53, 54.

CHAP. XXI.

Account of the different ſects among the Jews. The charge given by Jeſus to the multitude. The parables of the rich glutton, of the ſervant that waited the return of his Lord, and of the two ſtewards.

AS the principal ſects among the Jews are often mentioned by the Evangeliſts, it will be neceſſary to give a ſhort account of them, and their different tenets, in order to enable the reader to form a true idea of their reſpective characters; and at the ſame time enable him to ſee how it happened, that a Meſſiah, ſo plainly and frequently foretold from the beginning, ſo miraculouſly conceived and born, proclaimed by angels, and confirmed by innumerable miracles, the infallible ſeals of heaven; came to be rejected and perſecuted, even

even to death, by thoſe who were the keepers and expounders of the oracles which foretold and typified him, and eye-witneſſes of all his ſtupendous works.

Joſephus reckons four principal ſects among the Jews; the Phariſees, the Sadducees, called alſo the Herodians, the Eſſenians, and the Galileans. The Evangeliſts mention nothing of the two laſt, probably becauſe they did not oppoſe the goſpel with that inveteracy the others did.

The riſe of the Phariſees is unknown. They claim, indeed, the celebrated Hillel for their founder, as he is by ſome ſuppoſed to have lived during the pontificate of Jonathan, about an hundred and fifty years before the birth of Chriſt: but others, with more reaſon, ſuppoſe that he was contemporary with the famous Someas, who lived about the time of Herod, long before whom the ſect of the Phariſees was in high repute. It is therefore probable, that they claim Hillel rather as an ornament, than as the author of their ſect.

One of the moſt famous tenets of the Phariſees was that of an oral tradition handed down from Moſes, and to which they attributed the ſame divine authority as to the ſacred books. This being ſtrenuouſly oppoſed by the Sadducees and Samaritans, rendered theſe equally deteſted by them. But none more incurred their hatred than the bleſſed Jeſus, who embraced every occaſion of reproving them, for the unjuſtifiable preference they gave this pretended tradition to the written word of God, and for condemning thoſe as apoſtates worthy of death who did not pay the ſame, or even a greater regard to the former than to the latter.

Another tenet they embraced, in oppoſition to the Sadduces, was, that of the exiſtence of angels, the immortality of the ſoul, the reſurrection of the dead, and future rewards. But with regard to the laſt, they excluded all who were notoriouſly wicked from having any ſhare in the pleaſures of eternity; ſuppoſing that as ſoon as death had put a period to their exiſtence, their ſouls were conveyed into everlaſting puniſhments.

A third tenet was, that all things were ſubject to fate; or, as ſome expreſſed it, to the heavens, except the fear of God. It is not eaſy to conceive what they meant by this: Joſephus indeed will have it, That they deſigned to reconcile the fatality or predeſtination of the Eſſenians, with the free-will of the Sadducees.

If ſo, this is not the only abſurdity, or even contradiction, which they held: but our learned biſhop Bull ſeems to have proved, that they attributed all to fate, or to that chain of cauſes to which the Creator had ſubjected all things from the beginning; among which the influence of the heavenly bodies was conſidered as the principal. This ſeems to be hinted at by St. James, in the beginning of his epiſtle to new converts, where he explodes that Phariſaical leaven by the moſt beautiful oppoſition of the immutability of God, the giver of all good, to the mutability of the planets, which, according

to that notion, muſt neceſſarily vary their aſpects from a malign to a benevolent one, and the contrary, even by their natural motions and change of poſition. This tenet of the Phariſees, was therefore, a new ſource of diſlike to the doctrines delivered by the bleſſed Jeſus, as theſe affirm that men are the authors of their own unbelief, diſobedience, and obſtinacy; and, conſequently, anſwerable for that, and all the train of evils theſe vices draw after them.

But the moſt diſtinguiſhed character of the Phariſees, and that which rendered them moſt obnoxious to the juſt cenſures of our bleſſed Saviour, was their ſupererogatory attachment to the ceremonial law, their frequent waſhings, faſtings, and prayings, their giving alms publickly, ſeeking for proſelytes, ſcrupulous tythings, affected gravity of dreſs, geſture, and mortified looks; their building the tombs of the prophets, to tell the world that they were more righteous than their anceſtors who murdered them, tho' they were themſelves plotting the death of one greater than all the prophets; their over ſcrupulous obſervance of the ſabbath, to the excluſion of the works of the greateſt charity, and many other of the like nature; while they were wholly negligent of the moral and eternal law of mercy and juſtice; of charity, humility and the like indiſpenſible virtues. The very beſt of them contented themſelves with abſtaining from the actual committing any ſinful act, while they indulged themſelves in the moſt wicked thoughts and deſires. Nay, ſome, more hardened in their vices, made no ſcruple not only of coveting but devouring poor widows houſes; of committing the vileſt oppreſſions, injuſtices, and cruelties, and of encouraging theſe enormities in their diſciples, under the ſpecious cloak of religion and ſanctity. Well, therefore, might the great Redeemer of mankind compare them to whited ſepulchres, beautiful indeed without, but within full of rottenneſs and corruption.

The laſt erroneous opinion I ſhall mention of the Phariſees, common indeed to all the other ſects, but more exactly conformable to their haughty, rapacious, and cruel temper, was their expectation of a glorious, a conquering Meſſiah, who was to bring the whole world under the Jewiſh yoke; ſo that there was ſcarce an inhabitant of Jeruſalem, however mean, that did not expect to be made a governor of ſome opulent province under that wonderful prince. How unlikely was it then, that the preaching of the meek, the humble Jeſus, whoſe doctrine breathed nothing but humility, peace, ſincerity, contempt of the world, and univerſal love and beneficence, ſhould ever be reliſhed by that proud, that covetous, that hypocritical ſect, or even by the reſt of the populace, while theſe, their teachers, ſo ſtrenuouſly oppoſed it.

The ſect of the Sadducees was equally oppoſite to the doctrine of our Saviour: this ſect is ſaid to have been founded by one Saddoc, a diſciple of Antigonus of Socho. Their chief tenet was, that our ſerving God

God ought to be free either from ſlaviſh fear of puniſhment, or from ſelfiſh hope of reward; that it ſhould be diſintereſted, and flow only from the pure love and fear of the Supreme Being. They added, that God was the only immaterial being; in conſequence of which, they denied the exiſtence of angels, or any ſpiritual ſubſtances, except the Almighty himſelf. It is, therefore, no wonder, that the Sadducees ſhould take every opportunity of oppoſing, and ridiculing the doctrine of the reſurrection.

Another of their tenets, equally oppoſite to the Phariſees, and to the doctrine of Chriſt, was, that man was conſtituted abſolute maſter of all his actions, and ſtood in no need of any aſſiſtance to chooſe or act: for this reaſon they were always very ſevere in their ſentences, when they ſat as judges. They rejected all the pretended oral traditions of the Phariſees, admitting only the texts of the ſacred books, and preferred thoſe of Moſes to all the reſt of the inſpired writings.

They are charged with ſome other erroneous tenets, by Joſephus and the Talmudiſts; but thoſe already mentioned, are abundantly ſufficient for the purpoſe. The notion of a future life, univerſal judgment, eternal rewards and puniſhments to men, whom a contrary doctrine had long ſoothed into luxury and an overgrown fondneſs for temporal happineſs, which they conſidered as the only reward for their obedience, muſt of neceſſity appear ſtrange and frightful; and as ſuch could not fail of meeting with the ſtrongeſt oppoſition from them: eſpecially if we add what Joſephus obſerves, that they were in general, men of the greateſt quality and opulence, and conſequently too apt to prefer the pleaſures and grandeur of this life to thoſe of another.

The ſect of the Galileans or Gaulonites, ſo called from Judas the Galilean or Gaulonite, appeared ſoon after the baniſhment of Archelaus, when his territories were made a Roman province, and the government given to Coponius. For the Jews, conſidering this as an open attempt to reduce them to ſlavery, Judas took advantage of their diſcontent; and to ripen them for an inſurrection, Auguſtus furniſhed him with a plauſible pretence, by iſſuing, about this time, an edict for ſurveying the whole province of Syria, and laying on it a proportional tax. Judas, therefore, who was a man of uncommon ambition, took occaſion from this incident to diſplay all his eloquence, in order to convince the Jews, that ſuch a ſubmiſſion was nothing leſs than baſe idolatry, and placing men on a level with the God of Jacob, who was the only Lord and Sovereign that could challenge their obedience and ſubjection. The party which he drew after him became in a ſhort time ſo conſiderable, that they threw every thing into confuſion, laid the foundation for thoſe frightful conſequences that enſued, and which did not end but with the deſtruction of Jeruſalem.

The Eſſenians, though not mentioned

tioned by the Evangeliſts, made a very conſiderable ſect among the Jews, and are highly celebrated by Joſephus, Philo, Pliny, and ſeveral chriſtian writers, both ancient and modern. It is impoſſible to trace their origin, or even the etymology of their name. This however is certain, that they were ſettled in Judea, in the time of Jonathan, the brother and ſucceſſor of Judas Maccabeus, about an hundred and fifty years before Chriſt.

The Eſſenians diſtinguiſhed themſelves by their rules and manner of life into laborious and contemplative. The former divided their time between prayer and labour; ſuch as the exerciſe of ſome handicraft, or the cultivation of ſome particular ſpot of ground, where they planted and ſowed ſuch roots, corn, &c. as ſerved for their food; and the latter, between prayer, contemplation, and ſtudy. In this laſt they confined themſelves to the ſacred books and morality, without troubling themſelves with any other branch of philoſophy.

Both the contemplative and laborious had their ſynagogues, their ſtated hours for prayer, for reading and expounding the ſacred books. The latter was always performed by their elders, who were ſeated at the upper end of the ſynagogue, according to their ſeniority; while the younger, who were permitted to read the leſſons, were placed at the lower. Their expoſitions were generally of the allegorical kind, in which they ſeem to have excelled all their Jewiſh brethren. But they paid the greateſt regard to the five books of Moſes, and conſidered that law-giver as the head of all the inſpired pen-men: they even condemned to immediate death, whoever ſpoke diſreſpectfully either of him, or his writings. Upon this account they ſtudied, read, and expounded him more than all the reſt, and ſeem to have drawn all their religion chiefly from the Pentateuch. The doctrines and expoſitions of the elders were received with implicit faith, and in their practice they conformed with an entire ſubmiſſion to all their ſect.

With reſpect to their faith, they believed the exiſtence of angels, the immortality of the ſoul, and a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments, like the Phariſees; but ſeem to have had no notion of the reſurrection. They conſidered the ſouls of men as compoſed of a moſt ſubtle æther, which immediately after their ſeparation from the body, or from the cage or priſon, as they affected to call it, were adjudged to a place of endleſs happineſs or miſery; that the good took their flight over the ocean, into ſome warm or delightful regions prepared for them, while the wicked were conveyed to ſome cold and intemperate climates, where they were left to groan under an inexpreſſible weight of miſery. They were likewiſe entirely averſe to the Sadducean doctrine of free-will, attributing all to an eternal fatality, or chain of cauſes, little different from that of Spinoſa. They were averſe to all kinds of oaths; affirming that a man's life ought to be ſuch,

ſuch, that he may be credited without them. The contemplative ſort placed the excellency of their meditative life in raiſing their minds ſo far above the earth, as to be able to ſee from thence what was done in heaven: when they had attained this degree of excellency, they acquired the character of prophets.

In their practice they excelled all the other ſects in auſterity. If we may credit Philo, it was a fundamental maxim with them, upon their entrance into the contemplative life, to renounce the world, and to divide among their friends and relations their properties and eſtates. They never eat till after ſun-ſet, and the beſt of their food was coarſe bread, a little ſalt, and a few ſtomachic herbs. Their cloathing was made of coarſe wool, plain but white: they condemned all ſorts of unctions and perfumes, as luxurious and effeminate. Their beds were hard and their ſleep ſhort. Their heads or ſuperiors were generally choſen according to ſeniority, unleſs there ſtarted up among the brotherhood ſome more conſpicuous for learning, piety, or prophetic ſpirit. Some of them indeed were ſo contemplative, that they never ſtirred out of their cell, or even looked out of their window during the whole week, ſpending their time in reading the ſacred books, and writing comments upon them. On the ſabbath-day they repaired to their ſynagogues early in the morning, and continued there the whole day in prayers, ſinging of pſalms, or expounding the ſacred books.

Having given this account of the ſeveral ſects among the Jews, we ſhall now return to the hiſtory of our bleſſed Saviour, whom we left preaching in the country beyond Jordan, where he was ſurrounded by an innumerable multitude of people.

In the audience of this vaſt aſſembly, he gave his diſciples in general a charge, to beware of the leaven of the Phariſees, namely hypocriſy; becauſe all their actions would be brought to light, either in this world, or in that which is to come; and therefore exhorted them to be very careful never to do any thing which could not bear the light, but to let the whole of their behaviour be honeſt, juſt, and good. *Beware ye of the leaven of the Phariſees, which is hypocriſy. For there is nothing covered that ſhall not be revealed; neither any thing hid, that ſhall not be known. Therefore, whatſoever ye have ſpoken in darkneſs, ſhall be heard in the light; and that which ye have ſpoken in the ear in cloſets, ſhall be proclaimed upon the houſe-tops*, Luke xii. 1, 2, 3.

This argument againſt hypocriſy, he improved as a reaſon for their acquiring another quality, which would much better ſerve all the ends they could propoſe; namely, an undaunted reſolution in the performance of their duty, founded on a firm confidence in God, who created, and ſtill ſupports the world by the word of his power, and will, at length, reward every man according to his works.

Fear not, ſaid he, the malice of the human race: it can extend no farther than the deſtruction of the body;

body; your ſoul may bid defiance to their impotent rage. But dread the diſpleaſure of that Almighty Being, who, after he has deſtroyed the body, is able to confine the ſoul in eternal torments. Remember all things are in his power, and that nothing happens without his permiſſion; he provides for the meaneſt of his creatures, and ſurely you may think yourſelves under his protection, who numbers the very hairs of your head; nor can your enemies touch one of them without his permiſſion. *And I ſay unto you, my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you, whom ye ſhall fear: fear him, which after he hath killed, hath power to caſt into hell; yea, I ſay unto you, fear him. Are not five ſparrows ſold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? but even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many ſparrows*, Luke xii. 4, *&c.*

The bleſſed Jeſus added, that in order to keep themſelves unſhaken, they ſhould often look forward unto the general judgment, when he would acknowledge them as his ſervants, provided they acknowledged him in this world as their maſter, and chearfully and conſtantly obeyed his commands.

But if they were aſhamed of him, and his doctrine, before the ſons of men, he would diſown them before the celeſtial hoſt. And that thoſe, who reviled the ſpirit, by whom they performed their miracles, ſhould be puniſhed by the Almighty, in proportion to the malignity of their crime, which is greater than that of reviling the Son of God himſelf; becauſe it will be impoſſible for them to repent. *Alſo I ſay unto you, Whoſoever ſhall confeſs me before men, him ſhall the ſon of man alſo confeſs before the angels of God. But he that denieth me before men, ſhall be denied before the angels of God. And whoſoever ſhall ſpeak a word againſt the ſon of man it ſhall be forgiven him: but unto him that blaſphemeth the Holy Ghoſt, it ſhall not be forgiven*, Luke xii. 8, *&c.*

He alſo cautioned his diſciples not to be perplexed with regard to an anſwer, when they ſhould be brought before the rulers of the people, becauſe they ſhould be inſpired by the Spirit of God. *And when they ſhall bring you unto the ſynagogues, and unto magiſtrates and powers, take ye no thought how, or what thing ye ſhall anſwer, or what ye ſhall ſay. For the Holy Ghoſt ſhall teach you in the ſame hour, what ye ought to ſay*, Luke xii. 11, 12.

While our bleſſed Saviour was delivering theſe exhortations to his diſciples, a certain perſon among the multitude begged him, that he would interpoſe his authority with his brother, in order to oblige him to divide their paternal inheritance between them: but as this deciſion properly belonged to the magiſtrates, our bleſſed Saviour, who came into the world to redeem the ſouls of mankind, and purchaſe for them an eternal, not a temporal inheritance, declined the office. He however embraced the opportunity of giving his hearers the moſt ſolemn caution againſt

againſt covetouſneſs; declaring, that neither the length nor happineſs of human life, had any dependence on the largeneſs of poſſeſſions. *Take heed, and beware of covetouſneſs; for a man's life conſiſteth not in the abundance of the things which he poſſeſſeth,* Luke xii. 15.

And to enforce this important exhortation, he placed before them, in the ſtrongeſt light, an example of the bewitching influence of wealth, in the parable of the rich glutton, who was cut off in the midſt of his projects, and became a remarkable example of the folly of amaſſing the goods of this life, without having any regard to the commands of the Almighty. This wretched man, forgetting his own mortality, made preparations for a long and luxurious life, pleaſing himſelf with the thought of poſſeſſing an inexhauſtible fund of ſenſual enjoyments. But, alas! while he was providing repoſitories for his riches, the inexorable king of terrors ſeized him, and that very night hurried him before the awful tribunal of Omnipotence. *And he ſpake a parable unto them, ſaying, the ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully. And he thought within himſelf, ſaying, what ſhall I do, becauſe I have no room where to beſtow my fruits? And he ſaid, this will I do, I will pull down my barns, and build greater, and there will I beſtow all my fruits and my goods. And I will ſay unto my ſoul; ſoul, thou haſt much goods laid up for many years, take thine eaſe, eat, drink, and be merry. But God ſaid unto him, Thou fool, this night thy ſoul ſhall be required of thee; then whoſe ſhall theſe things be, which thou haſt provided?* Luke xii. 16. *&c.*

How awful a ſummons was this! while he lay waking on his bed in anxious ſolicitude what he ſhould do with his abundance; while his heart was dilated with the hopes of a variety of pleaſures and indulgences; in that very moment the golden dream vaniſhes at once; all his thoughts periſh, and in their ſtead, a horrid account ſtares him in the face; a ſcene of judgment preſents itſelf to his terrified imagination! a dark night of horror, in an inſtant overwhelms that ſoul to which he had promiſed ſo much eaſe, ſo much pleaſure: and inſtead of eaſe, inſtead of eating, drinking, and making merry, eternal tortures, unſpeakable thirſt, weeping, wailing, and gnaſhing of teeth, muſt be the portion of this miſerable ſoul to all eternity.

So is he, added our bleſſed Saviour, *that layeth up treaſure for himſelf, and is not rich towards God.* Thus ſhall he be taken away from all his ſoul deſireth; thus ſhall he be torn from all his temporal proſpects and pleaſures. None of his beloved enjoyments ſhall follow him; naked as he came, ſhall he depart out of the world, nor ſhall all his riches be able to procure him the leſt comfort or reſpite in theſe ſcenes of terror. How ſhould this reflection awaken us to a due care of our immortal part! how ſhould it alarm us, when planning fancied ſchemes of worldly pleaſures, without the leſt regard to the great Diſpoſer of all events! Without his

aſſiſtance, all our promiſes of ſecurity are vain and fooliſh; he will ſurely render all our labours abortive; and in a moment, when we think ourſelves ſecure, the ſummons ſhall arrive, ſwift as the forky lightning's flaſh, convey us to the boundleſs regions of eternity, and preſent us clothed in all our guilt, before the juſt, the mighty Author of our being!

Such is this awakening parable: it exhibits a ſtriking picture of the egregious folly of thoſe, who live only for themſelves, laying up treaſures for ſenſual enjoyments, but neglect the riches of good works, the invaluable treaſures of virtue and religion.

Having ſpoken this parable, our Lord proceeded to caution his diſciples againſt anxious cares for the things of this world; from a conſideration, that the care of God's providence extends to every part of the creation. The fowls of heaven are fed by his bounty, and the lillies that adorn the vallies are ſupplied with rain from the clouds of heaven: if, therefore, ſaid the bleſſed Jeſus, Omnipotence ſo carefully provides for the inferior parts of the creation, the children of men have ſurely reaſon to rely on his bounty, and depend for ſubſiſtance on his merciful hand. He added, that as God had deſtined them to everlaſting happineſs in a future life, he would ſurely provide for them all the neceſſaries of the preſent. *Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleaſure to give you the kingdom.* At the ſame time he gave his diſciples another precept, peculiarly calculated for thoſe times in which the profeſſion of the goſpel expoſed men to the loſs of their ſubſtance. *Sell all that ye have, and give alms: provide yourſelves bags which wax not old, a treaſure in the heavens that faileth not; where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth: for where your treaſure is, there will your heart be alſo,* Luke xii. 33, 34.

Having thus recommended to them the diſengagement of their affections from the things of this world, he exhorted them to be conſtantly ready to diſcharge their duty. *Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning. And ye yourſelves like unto men that wait for the Lord, when he ſhall return from the wedding, that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately,* Luke xii. 35, 36.

This was ſpoken in alluſion to the cuſtoms of the Eaſt, where antiently great entertainments were made in the evening; and on theſe occaſions, ſervants demonſtrated their diligence by watching and keeping their loins girded, and their lamps burning, that they might be ready, on the firſt knock of their maſter, to open the door. Nor was it uncommon for the maſter, in order to reward ſuch a ſervant, to order him a refreſhment, and ſometimes even give it him with his own hand. In alluſion to which cuſtom, our bleſſed Saviour added; *Bleſſed are thoſe ſervants, whom the Lord, when he cometh, ſhall find watching. Verily, I ſay unto you, that he will gird himſelf, and make them ſit down to meat, and will come*

come forth and ſerve them, Luke xii. 37.

Our Saviour enforced this conſtant watchfulneſs, and habitual preparation, by reminding them of the uncertainty of his coming; telling his diſciples, that as every maſter of a family, if he knew the coming of the thief, would make ſome preparation againſt a ſurprize, ſo it would be highly requiſite for them to make ſome preparation for the approach of their maſter, and be always ready to receive him, as the time of his coming was uncertain.

CHAP. XXII.

Jeſus reproves the multitude for not diſcerning the times. His anſwer to thoſe who told him of the Galileans ſlain by Pilate. Delivers the parable of the barren fig-tree. Heals the woman that was bowed down with an infirmity; and is deſired to leave the dominions of Herod.

JESUS having finiſhed his inſtructions to his diſciples, turned himſelf towards the multitude, and upbraided them with their unbelief. You can, ſaid he, by the ſigns that appear in the ſky, and on the earth, form a judgment of the weather; and why can ye not alſo, diſcover the time of the Meſſiah's appearance, by the ſigns which have preceded it? *When ye ſee a cloud riſe out of the weſt, ſtraightway ye ſay, there cometh a ſhower; and ſo it is. And when ye ſee the ſouth wind blow, ye ſay, there will be heat; and it cometh to paſs. Ye hypocrites, ye can diſcern the face of the ſky, and of the earth, but how is it that ye cannot diſcern this time?* Luke xii. 54, *&c.*

The prediction of the ſon of man coming to puniſh the Jews for their rebellion and infidelity, delivered under the ſimilitude of one who cometh ſecretly and unexpectedly to plunder a houſe, was a loud call to a national repentance. In order, therefore, to improve that prediction, he exhorted them to a ſpeedy reformation; telling them, that the leaſt degree of reflection would be ſufficient to point out to them the beſt methods they could poſſibly make uſe of for averting the impending judgments of the Almighty; illuſtrating what he had ſaid, by the puniſhments commonly inflicted on the man who refuſes to make reparation for the injuries he has done his neighbour. *When thou goeſt with thine adverſary to the magiſtrate, as thou art in the way, give diligence, that thou mayeſt be delivered from him; leſt he hale thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and the officer caſt thee into priſon. I tell thee thou ſhalt not depart thence, till thou haſt paid the very laſt mite,* Luke xii. 58, 59.

Some of his hearers thought proper to confirm this doctrine, by giving what they conſidered as an example of it. *There were preſent at that ſeaſon ſome that told him of the Galileans, whoſe blood Pilate had mingled with their ſacrifices;* thinking, that Providence, for ſome extraordinary crime, had ſuffered theſe Galileans to be murdered at the altar.

But our bleſſed Saviour expreſly told them, that in this they were greatly miſtaken, it being no indication that theſe Galileans were greater ſinners than their countrymen, becauſe they had ſuffered ſo ſevere a calamity; and, at the ſame time exhorted them to improve ſuch inſtances of calamity, as incitements to their own repentance; aſſuring them, that if they neglected ſo ſalutary a work, they ſhould all likewiſe periſh. *And Jeſus anſwering, ſaid unto them, ſuppoſe ye that theſe Galileans were ſinners above all the Galileans, becauſe they ſuffered ſuch things? I tell you nay: but except ye repent ye ſhall all likewiſe periſh*, Luke xiii. 2, 3.

He illuſtrated this doctrine, by putting them in mind of the eighteen perſons, on whom the tower of Siloam fell; ſhewing them, by this inſtance, the folly of interpreting the diſpenſations of Providence in that manner; for though this calamity ſeemed to flow immediately from the hand of God, yet, in all probability, it had involved people who were remarkable for their piety and goodneſs. *Or thoſe eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell and ſlew them; think ye that they were ſinners above all men that dwelt in Jeruſalem? I tell you nay; but except ye repent, ye ſhall all likewiſe periſh*, Luke xiii. 4, 5.

He alſo endeavoured to rouze them, by adding the parable of the fig-tree, which the maſter of the vineyard, after finding it three years barren, ordered to be deſtroyed; but was ſpared one year longer, at the earneſt ſolicitations of the gardener. *A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard, and he came and ſought fruit thereon, and found none. Then ſaid he unto the dreſſer of his vineyard, behold theſe three years I come ſeeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none, cut it down, why cumbreth it the ground? and he anſwering, ſaid unto him, Lord, let it alone this year alſo, till I ſhall dig about it, and dung it, and if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou ſhalt cut it down*, Luke xiii. 6, &c.

By this parable our bleſſed Saviour repreſented the goodneſs of the Almighty towards the Jews, in chuſing them for his people, giving them the outward diſpenſations of religion, and informing them of the improvements he expected they ſhould make of theſe advantages, and the puniſhments he would inflict upon them, in caſe they ſlighted ſuch benevolent offers. He alſo repreſented by it, in a very beautiful manner, the unbounded mercies of the Almighty, in ſparing them at the interceſſion of his Son, and giving them a farther time of trial, and ſtill greater advantages, by the preaching of the bleſſed Jeſus and his apoſtles; concluding with an inſinuation, that if they neglected this laſt opportunity, they ſhould periſh without remedy.

While Jeſus continued in the country of Perea, he obſerved, while he was teaching in one of the ſynagogues, on the ſabbath-day, a woman, who during the ſpace of eighteen years, had been unable to ſtand upright. A daughter of Iſrael labouring under ſo terrible a diſorder could not fail of attracting the compaſſion

paſſion of the Son of God. He beheld this affecting object, he pitied her deplorable condition, he removed her complaint. She who came into the ſynagogue, bowed down with an infirmity, was, by the all-powerful word of the Son of God, reſtored to her natural health, and returned to her houſe upright and full of vigour.

This benevolent action, which ſurely deſerved the thanks of the whole congregation, ſo highly offended the maſter of the ſynagogue, that he openly teſtified his diſpleaſure, and reproved the people as ſabbath-breakers, becauſe they came on that day to be healed. *There are ſix days*, ſaid this ſurly ruler to the people, *in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the ſabbath-day*, Luke xiii. 14.

But our bleſſed Saviour ſoon ſilenced this hypocritical Phariſee, by ſhewing that he had not deviated from their own avowed practice. They made no ſcruple of looſing their cattle, and leading them to water on the ſabbath day, becauſe the mercy of the action ſufficiently juſtified them for performing it. And ſurely his action of looſing, by a ſingle word, a woman, a rational creature, a daughter of Abraham, that had been bound by an incurable diſtemper, during the tedious interval of eighteen years, was abundantly juſtified; nor could this bigoted ruler have thought otherwiſe, had not his reaſon been blinded by his ſuperſtition. *The Lord then anſwered him, and ſaid, Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you, on the ſabbath looſe his ox or his aſs from the ſtall, and lead him away to watering? And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom ſatan hath bound, lo, theſe eighteen years, be looſed from this bond on the ſabbath-day? And when he had ſaid theſe things, all his adverſaries were aſhamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him*, Luke xiii. 15, &c.

From this inſtance we may form ſome idea of the pernicious effects of ſuperſtition, which is capable of extinguiſhing reaſon, baniſhing compaſſion, and of eradicating the moſt eſſential principles and feelings of the human breaſt.

Jeſus having thus ſilenced the ruler of the ſynagogue, and obſerving the acclamations of the people, he reflected with pleaſure on the reaſon and truth, which ſo effectually ſupported his kingdom. For he repeated the parables of the grain of muſtard-ſeed and of the leaven, to ſhew the efficacious operations of the goſpel upon the minds of the children of men, and its rapid progreſs through the world, notwithſtanding all the oppoſition of its inveterate enemies.

Our bleſſed Saviour having now planted the ſeeds of the goſpel, in the country of Perea, croſſed the Jordan, and travelled by ſlow journeys towards Jeruſalem, preaching the goſpel in every village, and declaring the glad tidings of ſalvation to all the inhabitants of theſe countries.

While he was thus labouring for the ſalvation of mankind, one of the

perſons who accompanied him, aſked him, *Lord, are there few that be ſaved?* In all probability the perſon who propoſed this queſtion, had heard the Son of God deſcribe the ſucceſs of the goſpel, by the parables of the muſtard-ſeed and the leaven; and his notions of the kingdom of the Meſſiah, being thoſe that were then entertained by the Jews in general, he meant a temporal ſalvation. But Jeſus, to convince him that he never intended to erect a ſecular kingdom, anſwered the queſtion in a ſpiritual manner, and told him, That a ſmall number only of the Jews ſhould be ſaved; exhorting them to embrace the offers of mercy before it was too late, for that many, after the period of their trial is concluded, and their ſtate finally and irreverſably determined, ſhould earneſtly deſire theſe benevolent offers, but ſhould be denied their requeſt. *Strive to enter in at the ſtrait gate: for many, I ſay unto you, ſhall ſeek to enter in, and ſhall not be able. When once the maſter of the houſe is riſen up, and has ſhut to the door, and ye begin to ſtand without, and to knock at the door, ſaying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he ſhall anſwer, and ſay unto you, I know you not, whence ye are,* Luke xiii. 24, 25.

He alſo repeated on this occaſion, what he had before delivered in his famous ſermon on the mount; and what he had obſerved to the multitude in commendation of the Centurion's faith. *Then ſhall ye begin to ſay, We have eaten and drunk in thy preſence, and thou haſt taught in our ſtreets. But he ſhall ſay, I tell you, I know you not whence you are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There ſhall be weeping and gnaſhing of teeth, when ye ſhall ſee Abraham, and Iſaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourſelves thruſt out. And they ſhall come from the eaſt, and from the weſt, and from the north, and from the ſouth, and ſhall ſit down in the kingdom of God. And behold, there are laſt which ſhall be firſt, and there are firſt which ſhall be laſt,* Luke xiii. 26, *&c.*

Soon after our bleſſed Saviour had ſpoken theſe words to the multitude, certain of the Phariſees came to him, and told him, that unleſs he departed thence, Herod would deſtroy him: but this concern for his ſafety was altogether feigned, and their real deſign no other, than to intimidate him, hoping by that means to enduce him to leave the country, and retire into Judea, where they did not doubt, but the chief prieſts would find ſome method of putting him to death. Perhaps Herod himſelf was privy to this meſſage, and deſirous that Jeſus ſhould leave his territories; though the agonies he had ſuffered, on account of John the Baptiſt, hindered him from making uſe of force. That this was really the caſe, ſeems evident, from the anſwer our bleſſed Saviour made to the Phariſees. *Go ye,* ſaid he, to theſe hypocritical Iſraelties, *and tell that fox, Behold, I caſt out devils, and I do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I ſhall be perfected. Nevertheleſs, I muſt walk to-day, and to-morrow, and the day following: for*

for it cannot be, that a prophet periſh out of Jeruſalem, Luke xiii. 31—33.

Having given this anſwer to the Phariſees, he reflected on the treatment the prophets had received from the inhabitants of Jeruſalem; pathetically lamented their obſtinacy, and the terrible deſolation that would in a ſhort time overtake them. *Oh! Jeruſalem, Jeruſalem, which killeſt the prophets, and ſtoneſt them that are ſent unto thee: how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not? Behold, your houſe is left unto you deſolate: and verily I ſay unto you, ye ſhall not ſee me, until the time come, when ye ſhall ſay, Bleſſed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord*, Luke xiii. 34, 35.

CHAP. XXIII.

Jeſus dines with the Phariſees a third time. Delivers the parables of the marriage-ſupper, the loſt ſheep, the piece of money, the prodigal ſon, and of the ſteward who had waſted his Lord's goods.

SOON after our Saviour had made this pathetic exclamation, one of the Phariſees invited him to his houſe. The bleſſed Jeſus was not ignorant that this invitation was inſidious; but as he never ſhunned any opportunity of doing good, even to his moſt implacable enemies, he accepted the invitation. At his entering the Phariſee's houſe, they placed before him a man that had a dropſy, doubtleſs with an intention to accuſe him for healing on the ſabbath-day; being perſuaded that he would work a miracle, in favour of ſo melancholy an object. Jeſus, who knew the ſecret thoughts of their hearts, aſked the lawyers and Phariſees, whether it was *lawful to heal on the ſabbath-day?* But they refuſing to give any anſwer to the queſtion, Jeſus laid his hand on the diſeaſed perſon, and immediately his complexion returned, his body was reduced to its ordinary dimenſions, and his former health and ſtrength renewed in an inſtant. So ſurpriſing a miracle might ſurely have convinced the Phariſees, that the Author muſt have been endued with power from on high; but, inſtead of being perſuaded that he was a perſon ſent from God, and laboured only for the benefit of the children of men, they were contriving how they might turn this miracle to his diſadvantage. Our Lord, however, ſoon diſconcerted their projects, by proving, that, according to their own avowed practice, he had done nothing but what was truly lawful. *Which of you*, ſaid he, *ſhall have an aſs or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not ſtraightway pull him out on the ſabbath-day?* If a misfortune happens to one of your beaſts, you make no ſcruple of aſſiſting it on the ſabbath, though the action may be attended with conſiderable labour: and ſurely I may relieve a deſcendant of Abraham, when nothing more is requiſite than touching him with my hand. This argument was concluſive, and ſo plain, that the groſſeſt ſtupidity muſt feel its force, and the moſt virulent malice could not contradict it.

Before they had ſat down to meat, our bleſſed Saviour had an opportunity of obſerving the pride of the Phariſees, and remarking what anxiety each of them expreſſed to obtain the moſt honourable place at the table. Nor did he let their ridiculous behaviour paſs without a proper animadverſion; in which he obſerved, that pride generally expoſes a perſon to many affronts, and that humility is the ſureſt method of gaining reſpect. *When thou art bidden*, ſaid he, *of any man to a wedding, ſit not down in the higheſt room: leſt a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him; and he that bade thee and him, come and ſay to thee, give this man place; and thou begin with ſhame to take the loweſt room; but when thou art bidden, go and ſit down in the loweſt room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may ſay unto thee, friend, go up higher: then ſhalt thou have worſhip in the preſence of them that ſit at meat with thee. For whoſoever exalteth himſelf, ſhall be abaſed; and he that humbleth himſelf ſhall be exalted*, Luke xiv. 8. *&c.*

Having ſaid this to the Phariſees in general, he turned him to the maſter of the houſe, and ſaid to him, *When thou makeſt a dinner or a ſupper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinſmen nor thy rich neighbours; leſt they alſo bid thee again, and a recompence be made thee. But when thou makeſt a feaſt, call the poor, the maimed, the lame and the blind*, Luke xiv. 12, 13. Be very careful not to limit thy hoſpitality to the rich, but let the poor alſo partake of thy bounty. *And thou ſhalt be bleſſed; for they cannot recompence thee: for thou ſhalt be recompenced at the reſurrection of the juſt*, Luke xiv. 14.

One of the Phariſees, raviſhed with the delightful proſpect of the happineſs good men enjoyed in the heavenly Caanan, cried out, *Bleſſed is he that ſhall eat bread in the kingdom of God.* Bleſſed is he, who being admitted into the happy regions of Paradiſe, ſhall enjoy the converſation of the inhabitants of thoſe heavenly countries; as thoſe ſpiritual repaſts muſt regale and invigorate his mind beyond expreſſion. In anſwer to which, our bleſſed Saviour delivered the parable of the marriage-ſupper, repreſenting, by the invitation of the gueſts, the doctrine of the goſpel, and the ſucceſs thoſe beneficent invitations to the great feaſt of heaven, ſhould meet with among the Jews; foretelling, that though it was attended with every inviting circumſtance, they would diſdainfully reject it, and prefer the pleaſures of a temporal exiſtence, to thoſe of an eternal ſtate; while the Gentiles, with the greateſt chearfulneſs, would embrace the beneficent offer, and thereby be prepared to ſit down with Abraham, Iſaac and Jacob, in the happy manſions of the kingdom of heaven. But as this parable was afterwards ſpoken by our bleſſed Saviour in the temple, I ſhall refer the obſervations I propoſe to make on it, till I come to the hiſtory where it was again delivered.

After our bleſſed Saviour had left the Phariſee's houſe, great multitudes of people thronged to him, to hear his doctrine; but miſtook

the true intention of it, expecting he was going to eſtabliſh the Meſſiah's throne in Jeruſalem, and render all the nations of the world tributary to his power. The benevolent Jeſus therefore took the firſt opportunity to undeceive them, and to declare in the plaineſt terms, that his kingdom was not of this world, and conſequently, that thoſe who expected, by following him, to obtain temporal advantages, would find themſelves wretchedly miſtaken; as, on the contrary, his diſciples muſt expect to be perſecuted from city to city, and hated of all men for his name ſake: though it was requiſite for thoſe who would be his true followers, to prefer his ſervice to the riches, grandeur, and pleaſures of the world; and to ſhew, by their conduct, that they had much leſs reſpect and value for the deareſt objects of their affections than for him. *If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and ſiſters, yea, and his own life alſo, he cannot be my diſciple. And whoſoever doth not bear his croſs, and come after me, cannot be my diſciple,* Luke xiv. 26, 27.

And in order to induce them to weigh this doctrine attentively in their minds, he elucidated it with two oppoſite caſes, that of an unthinking builder, and that of a raſh warrior. The former was obliged to leave his ſtructure unfiniſhed, becauſe he had fooliſhly began the building, before he had computed the coſt; and the latter reduced to the dilemma of being inglorioufly defeated, or meanly ſuing for peace, before the battle; having raſhly declared war, before he had conſidered the ſtrength of his own and his enemy's army. *So likewiſe, whoſoever he be of you,* added the bleſſed Jeſus, *that forſaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my diſciple,* Luke xiv. 33.

Soon after, the publicans and ſinners, doubtleſs awakened by the ſtings of their own conſciences, came to hear his doctrine. This opportunity was readily embraced by the great Redeemer of mankind, who not only condeſcended to preach to them the happy tidings of eternal life, but even accompanied them to their own houſes; that, if poſſible, the ſeeds of the goſpel might take root in their hearts. But this condeſcenſion of the meek and humble Jeſus, was conſidered by the haughty Phariſees, as an action too mean for the character of a prophet. They murmured, and were highly diſpleaſed at a condeſcenſion, which ought to have given them the greateſt joy. But Jeſus ſoon ſhewed them their miſtake, by repeating to them the parables of the loſt ſheep and piece of money. (*See* Chap. xvii.) Intimating thereby, the great care all prophets and paſtors ought to take of thoſe committed to their care, and the obligation they lay under of ſearching diligently for every wandering ſinner, whoſe converſion is a grateful offering to the Almighty. *There is joy in the preſence of the angels of God, over one ſinner that repenteth,* Luke xv. 10.

To illuſtrate this doctrine ſtill farther, and exhibit to the view of his hearers, the comfortable doctrine of remiſſion,

remiſſion, and of free pardon for all offences, on their ſincere repentance and return to their heavenly Father, he delivered the expreſſive parable of the prodigal ſon.

A certain man had two ſons, the younger of whom, not content to live in his father's houſe, ſafe under his protection, and happy under his eye, deſired his father to give him the portion of goods which fell to his ſhare. This indulgent father did not heſitate to grant his requeſt; but the ungrateful ſon had no ſooner obtained what he aſked of his parent, than he left the preſence and neighbourhood of ſo kind a father, and retired into a far country, where he had an opportunity of indulging without reſtraint, his wicked inclinations; and there he waſted his ſubſtance in riotous living. Having thus conſumed the portion given him by his indulgent parent, he began to feel the miſeries of want, and, to add to his misfortunes, a terrible famine aroſe in that land; ſo that he ſoon became acquainted with the ſharp ſtings of hunger. In this diſtreſſed condition, he joined himſelf to a citizen of that country, willing to try every expedient, rather than return to his kind, his merciful father, and humbly confeſs his faults. His maſter, from a juſt contempt of his former prodigality, employed him in the meaneſt and moſt contemptible offices; he ſent him into his field to feed ſwine. Behold here, ye ſons of extravagance, a change indeed! Behold this thoughtleſs prodigal, reduced at once from a life of voluptuouſneſs and gaiety, a life of pleaſure and exceſs, to a life of the moſt abject ſlavery, a life of penury and want! Nay ſo great was his hunger, ſo prodigious his diſtreſs, that he would even have been contented, in this miſerable ſtate, to have ſatisfied the cravings of his hunger, with the huſks eaten by the ſwine: but no man relieved him, no man ſhewed the leaſt compaſſion for him; ſo that the very ſwine were in a better condition than this miſerable prodigal!

So complicated a ſcene of miſery brought him to himſelf: he had hiterto been in a ſtate of utter forgetfulneſs; but now began to reflect on his happy condition, while he continued with his father, before he had deviated from the paths of virtue, and to compare it with his preſent deplorable condition. *How many hired ſervants of my father*, ſaid he to himſelf, *have bread enough, and to ſpare, and I periſh with hunger.* I will therefore, undeſerving as I am, have recourſe to his mercy and favour. *I will ariſe and go to my father*, for ſuch he ſtill is, and I, tho' wretched and loſt, am yet his ſon; I will therefore *ſay unto him, Father, I have ſinned againſt heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy ſon:* that happineſs is too great for me to expect or deſire; I have, by my behaviour, forfeited all the right I once had in ſo endearing ſo valuable a title: *Make me as one of thy hired ſervants.* I deſire nothing more, than that thou wouldſt mercifully receive me as one of thy hired ſervants.

Having thus taken a firm reſolu-

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tion of throwing himſelf at the feet of his father, and imploring forgiveneſs for his paſt offences, he did not delay to put it immediately in execution; he aroſe, and with the utmoſt expedition came to his father!

A ſcene of tenderneſs and affection, amazingly pathetic, now preſents itſelf to our view! His kind, his affectionate father ſaw him while he was yet afar off; his bowels yearned towards him, he had compaſſion on his loſt, his ruined child: paternal fondneſs would not ſuffer him to forbear, he ran to meet him, he fell on his neck, he kiſſed him. Encouraged by this kind reception, the ſon fell down at his father's feet, and began to make confeſſion of his faults, to plead his own unworthineſs, to requeſt his father's pardon: *Father*, ſaid he, *I have ſinned againſt heaven, and in thy ſight, and am no more worthy to be called thy ſon.*—He was not ſuffered to proceed any farther, the love of his parent prevented the reſt; he commanded his ſervants to bring the beſt robe, and put it on him, to put a ring on his hand, and ſhoes on his feet; and to kill the fatted calf, that they might eat and be merry. *For this, my ſon*, ſaid he, *was dead, and is alive again; he was loſt, and is found.*

During this tranſaction, the elder brother was in the field, properly employed in his father's buſineſs; but returning from thence, and hearing the ſound of mirth, muſic, and dancing, he called one of the ſervants, and asked what theſe things meant? The ſervant replied, that his younger brother was returned, and that his father had killed the fatted calf, becauſe he had received him ſafe and ſound. This news greatly diſpleaſed the elder ſon; he was very angry, and refuſed to go in; upon which his father came out and intreated him; but he replied, *Lo! theſe many years do I ſerve thee, neither tranſgreſſed I at any time thy commandment, and yet thou never gaveſt me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: but as ſoon as this thy ſon was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou haſt killed for him the fatted calf*, Luke xv. 29, *&c.*

His father, with the moſt amiable condeſcending tenderneſs, replied, *Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine: it was meet that we ſhould make merry and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again, and was loſt, and is found.* Though he hath devoured my living with harlots, yet he is both thy brother and my ſon; thou ſhouldſt not, therefore be angry, becauſe he has repented and is returned, after we thought him irrecoverably loſt.

Thus ſtands this moſt beautiful and expreſſive parable, which may vie with the beſt profane writings for the excellency of its painting, and which equals every other parable of our Saviour, for the ſweetneſs of its doctrine, and the abundant conſolation it brings to every ſoul.

There are three expoſitions given of this inſtructive repreſentation, each of which ſeems to have ſome place in the original deſign; for it ſhould be obſerved, and carefully remembered, that the parables and doctrines of our Saviour,

Saviour, are by no means to be confined abſolutely to one ſingle point of view, ſince they frequently have relation to different objects, and conſequently prove the riches and depth of the manifold wiſdom of Omnipotence. In this parable, for inſtance, the great and principal doctine, intended to be particularly inculcated is, that ſinners, upon their repentance, are gladly received into favour; or that there is joy in heaven over one ſinner that repenteth. There are, however, two other expoſitions of this parable; the firſt is, that of the greateſt part of the ancients, who expound it of Adam. He was made in the image of God, and endowed with many other excellent gifts, which he might have uſed happily, had he been content to ſtay in his father's houſe; but, like this younger brother, who fooliſhly deſired his portion of goods to himſelf, that he might be his own maſter, and under no confinement or reſtriction; he was unwilling to remain under the obedience of the divine Precept; he was deſirous of having a free uſe of the things in Paradiſe, and by the devil's inſtigation affected a wretched independency, which cauſed him to break the divine command, and eat of the forbidden tree, to obtain the knowledge of good and evil. Thus he loſt for himſelf, and his poſterity, the ſubſtance put at firſt into his poſſeſſion; but his heavenly Father, on his, and his poſterity's return, hath provided ſuch grace and compaſſion for them, that they may be re-inſtated in their former place and favour. And the ſame grace not being granted to the higher order of intellectual beings, the fallen ſpirits, is the cauſe of their murmuring againſt God and men, repreſented by the anſwer of the elder brother in this parable; for it is conjectured by many, That the grace originally propoſed for man, through Chriſt, in caſe of his fall, was the principal occaſion of the rebellion of the apoſtate angels.

Others, *ſecondly*, With a much greater ſhew of probability, expound this parable of the two people, the Jews and Gentiles, and who have both one Father, even God. And while they both continued in their Father's houſe, the true church, they wanted for nothing: there was plenty of food for the ſoul, there was ſubſtance enough for them both. But the latter, repreſented by the younger brother, poſſeſſed of his ſhare of knowledge, went into a ſtrange country, left God, and ſpent his ſubſtance, the evidence and knowledge of the Almighty, fell into idolatry, and waſted all he had in riotous living; all his knowledge of God, in the looſe and abſurd ceremonies of idolatry. Then behold a mighty famine aroſe in that land, the worſhip of the true God was baniſhed the country. In this dreadful dearth and hunger, he joined himſelf to the devil, and worked all *Uncleanneſs with greedineſs*. But finding nothing to ſatisfy his ſpiritual hunger, this prodigal, long eſtranged from his father, reflecting on his ſpiritual famine and his own ſevere wants, humbly confeſſed

feſſed his faults, returned to his offended father, was readmitted into favour, and bleſſed with the privileges of the goſpel. But the elder brother, the Jewiſh church, daily employed in the field of legal ceremonies, and who had long groaned under the yoke of the law, ſeeing the Gentiles received into the covenant of the goſpel, obtain the remiſſion of ſins, and the hopes of everlaſting life, murmured againſt the benevolent acts of the Almighty. God, however, out of his great compaſſion, pleaded pathetically the cauſe with the elder brother, offered him all things, upon ſuppoſition of his continuing in his obedience, and declared that he had delivered the nations from the heavy yoke of the ceremonial law. Thus the parable has a very clear and elegant expoſition, the murmuring of the elder brother is explained to us without the leſt difficulty; and as the offence of receiving the Gentiles to pardon and peace through Jeſus Chriſt, was ſo great a ſtumbling-block to the Jews, it is natural to imagine, that our Saviour intended to obviate and remove it by this excellent parable.

It is however evident, both from the context and the occaſion of delivering it, that the third interpretation is the firſt in deſign and importance. The publicans and ſinners drew near to hear Jeſus. This gave occaſion to a murmuring among the Phariſees; and, upon their murmuring, our Saviour delivered this and two other parables, to ſhew, that if they would reſemble God, and the celeſtial hoſt, they ſhould, inſtead of murmuring, rejoice at ſeeing ſinners willing to embrace the doctrines of the goſpel; becauſe there is joy in the preſence of God and his angels over one ſinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine juſt perſons that *need no repentance*. The obſtinacy and malicious temper of the Phariſees, who oppoſed every good doctrine, made a deep impreſſion on the ſpirit of the bleſſed Jeſus; he did not therefore content himſelf barely with juſtifying his receiving ſinners, in order to their reformation, but, in preſence of the ſcribes and Phariſees, turned himſelf to his diſciples, and delivered the parable of the artful ſteward, as an inſtance of the improvements made by the children of this world, in embracing every opportunity and advantage for improving their intereſts. *There was*, ſaid he, *a certain rich man, which had a ſteward, and the ſame was accuſed unto him, that he had waſted his goods. And he called him, and ſaid unto him, how is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy ſtewardſhip, for thou mayeſt be no longer ſteward*, Luke xvi. 1, 2.

This reprimand of his lord, and the inward conviction of his own conſcience, that the accuſation was juſt, induced him to reflect on his own ill management of his lord's affairs, and in what manner he ſhould ſupport himſelf when he ſhould be diſcharged from his ſervice. *What ſhall I do?* ſaid he, *for my Lord taketh away from me the ſtewardſhip; I cannot dig, to beg I am aſhamed.* In this manner he deliberated with

himſelf, and at laſt reſolved on the following expedient, in order to make himſelf friends, who would ſuccour him in his diſtreſs. *I am reſolved what to do, that when I am put out of the ſtewardſhip, they may receive me into their houſes: ſo he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and ſaid unto the firſt, how much oweſt thou unto my lord? And he ſaid an hundred meaſures of oil. And he ſaid unto him, take thy bill, and ſit down quickly, and write fifty. Then ſaid he to another, And how much oweſt thou? And he ſaid an hundred meaſures of wheat. And he ſaid unto him, take thy bill, and write fourſcore,* Luke xvi. 4, *&c.*

It ſhould be obſerved, for the better underſtanding this part of the parable, that the riches and trade of the Jews, originally conſiſted principally in the products of the earth: they were, if I may be allowed the expreſſion, a nation of farmers and ſhepherds; ſo that all their wealth aroſe from the produce of their flocks and herds, and the fruits of the earth; their corn, their wine, and their oil.

Thus the ſteward, to ſecure the friendſhip of his Lord's tenants, bound them to him under a laſting obligation; and his maſter, when he heard of the proceedings of his ſteward, commended him, not becauſe he had acted honeſtly, but becauſe he had acted wiſely: he commended the art and addreſs he had ſhewn, in procuring a future ſubſiſtance; he commended the prudence and ingenuity he had uſed with regard to his own private intereſt, and to deliver him from future poverty and diſtreſs. *For the children of this world,* added the bleſſed Jeſus, *are in their generation wiſer than the children of light,* Luke xvi. 8. They are more prudent and careful, more anxious and circumſpect to ſecure their poſſeſſions in this world, than the children of light are to ſecure in the next an eternal inheritance. *And I ſay unto you, make unto yourſelves friends of the mammon of unrighteouſneſs, that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlaſting habitations,* Luke xvi. 9.

This advice of our Saviour is worthy our moſt ſerious attention; the beſt uſe we can make of our riches being to employ them in promoting the ſalvation of others. For if we uſe our abilities and intereſts in turning ſinners from the evil of their ways; if we ſpend our wealth in this excellent ſervice, we ſhall conciliate the good will of all the heavenly beings, who will greatly rejoice at the converſion of ſinners, and with open arms receive us into the manſions of felicity.

But this is not the whole application our Saviour made of this parable. He added, that if we made uſe of our riches in the manner he recommended, we ſhould be received into thoſe everlaſting habitations, where all the friends of virtue and religion reſide; becauſe, by our fidelity in managing the ſmall truſt of temporal advantages committed to our care, we ſhew ourſelves worthy and capable of a much greater truſt in heavenly employments. But if, on the contrary, we do not apply

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our riches to the glory of God, and the good of mankind, we ſhall be for ever baniſhed from the abodes of the bleſſed; becauſe, in behaving unfaithfully in the ſmall truſt committed to us here, we render ourſelves both unworthy and incapable of a ſhare in this everlaſting inheritance. *He that is faithful in that which is leaſt, is faithful alſo in much: and he that is unjuſt in the leaſt, is unjuſt alſo in much. If, therefore, ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your truſt the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who will give you that which is your own?* Luke xvi. 10, *&c.*

And if, while ye are God's ſtewards and ſervants, ye deſert your truſt, and become ſlaves to the deſire of riches, you can expect no other than to be called to a ſtrict account of your ſtewardſhip; covetouſneſs being as abſolutely inconſiſtent with piety as it is for a man to undertake at one and the ſame time, to ſerve two maſters of contrary diſpoſitions and oppoſite intereſts. *No man can ſerve two maſters: for either he will hate the one and love the other; or elſe he will hold to the one and deſpiſe the other. Ye cannot ſerve God and mammon,* Luke xvi. 13.

Such is the parable, and ſuch is our Lord's application of it, from whence the main intention and deſign of it is very evident. It was intended to incite us to a zealous concern for our future and eternal ſtate, by making a due uſe of the goods entruſted to our ſtewardſhip, and particularly by employing our riches in works of beneficence and charity. And if we perſevere in this happy courſe, we ſhall joyfully ſtand at the right hand of the great Judge of all the earth, and receive from him a public teſtimony of our faith and love. "Come ye bleſſed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the beginning of the world; for I was an hungry and ye gave me meat, I was thirſty and ye gave me drink: I was a ſtranger and ye took me in: naked and ye clothed me: I was ſick and ye viſited me, I was in priſon and ye came unto me." And thus ſhall we have made ourſelves friends of the mammon of unrighteouſneſs, and be received into everlaſting habitations.

CHAP. XXIII.

Jeſus rebukes the Phariſees, delivers the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, and lays down the doctrine of offences and forgiveneſs.

THE covetous Phariſees, having attended to the doctrine of our Saviour with regard to the true uſe of riches, and the impoſſibility of men ſerving God and mammon at the ſame time, derided him as a viſionary ſpeculiſt; who deſpiſed the pleaſures of this world, for no other reaſon, but becauſe he was not able to procure them. It is therefore no wonder, that men who had ſhewed ſuch a complication of the very worſt diſpoſitions, ſhould receive a ſharp rebuke from the meek

and humble Jeſus: accordingly he told them, that they made, indeed, ſpecious pretences to extraordinary ſanctity, by outwardly ſhunning the company of ſinners, while in private they made no ſcruple of having ſociety with them, or even of joining with them in their wickedneſs. *Ye are they which juſtify yourſelves before men, but God knoweth your hearts.* Ye may indeed cover the foulneſs of your crimes with the painted cloak of hypocriſy, and in this diſguiſe deceive thoſe who look no farther than the outſide, but ye cannot ſkreen your wickedneſs from the penetrating eye of Omnipotence, to whom all things are naked and expoſed, and who judges of things not by their appearances, but according to truth; it is therefore no wonder that he often abhors both perſons and things, that are held by men in the higheſt eſtimation; *for that which is highly eſteemed among men, is abomination in the ſight of God.*

And ſurely you have no reaſon to blame me for frequenting the company of publicans and ſinners, becauſe I do it purely to bring about their converſion: the Moſaic diſpenſation which made a difference between men, ceaſing when John the Baptiſt firſt preached the doctrine of repentance; and the goſpel diſpenſation, which admits all repenting ſinners without diſtinction, then commenced. *The law and the prophets were until John: ſince that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man preſſeth into it,* Luke xvi. 16.

You are not, however, to think that I intend to leſſen the authority of the law; for till the law is abrogated, the leaſt of its precepts cannot be neglected. *It is eaſier for heaven and earth to paſs, than for one tittle of the law to fail.*

After treating of theſe particulars, he proceeded to conſider the love of pleaſure, ſo highly valued by the Phariſees, whoſe luſt diſcovered itſelf by their frequent divorces, a practice which our bleſſed Saviour juſtly condemned. *Whoſoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whoſoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband, committeth adultery,* Luke xvi. 18.

Theſe reaſons were clear and unanſwerable: but the Phariſees, ſtupified and intoxicated with ſenſual pleaſures, were deaf to every argument, how powerful ſoever, provided it was levelled againſt their luſts. In order to illuſtrate this truth, confirm his aſſertion, and rouze theſe hypocritical rulers from their lethargy, he ſpoke the awaking parable of the rich man and the beggar.

There was a certain rich man, which was cloathed in purple and fine linen, and fared ſumptuouſly every day. And there was a certain beggar, named Lazarus, who was laid at his gate full of ſores, and deſiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover, ſo great was his miſery, ſo exquiſite his diſtreſs, *the dogs came and licked his ſores.* Thus wretched in life, the Almighty at laſt releaſed him, *the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's boſom.* Nor could the rich man's

man's wealth reſcue him from the ſame fate, *the rich man alſo died and was buried.* But behold now the great, the awful change! *In hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and ſeeth Abraham afar off, and* the late deſpiſed afflicted *Lazarus in his boſom.* In this agony of pain and diſtreſs, he cried to Abraham, his earthly father; begging that he would take pity on him, and ſend Lazarus to give him even the leaſt degree of relief, that of dipping the tip of his finger in water to cool his tongue, for his torment was intollerable. *Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and ſend Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham ſaid, ſon, remember that thou in thy life time receiveđſt thy good things, and likewiſe Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beſides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed; ſo that they which would paſs from hence to you, cannot, neither can they paſs to us, that would come from thence,* Luke xvi. 24, &c.

The miſerable wretch, finding it impoſſible to procure any relief for himſelf, was deſirous of preſerving his thoughtleſs relations from the like diſtreſs; *then he ſaid, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldeſt ſend him to my father's houſe, for I have five brethren, that he may teſtify unto them, leſt they alſo come into this place of torment.* This alſo was a petition that could not be granted. 'Tis too late to hope for relief, when the ſoul is caſt into the bottomleſs pit. They may learn, ſaid Abraham, the certainty of the immortality of the ſoul, from the books of Moſes and the prophets, if they will give themſelves the trouble to peruſe them attentively. To which the miſerable object replied, that the books of Moſes, and the prophets had been ineffectual to him, and he feared would be ſo to his brethren. But if one actually aroſe from the dead, and appeared to them, they would certainly repent and embrace thoſe offers of ſalvation they had before ſlighted. *Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.* But Abraham told him, that in this he was greatly miſtaken; for that if they refuſed to believe the evidences of a future ſtate, contained in the writings of Moſes and the prophets, the teſtimony of a meſſenger from the dead would not be ſufficient to convince them. If they hear not Moſes and the prophets, neither will they be perſuaded, though one roſe from the dead.

This truth, aſſerted by Abraham, has been abundantly proved by undeniable facts; from whence it has appeared, that thoſe who will not be convinced by a ſtanding revelation, will not be convinced, though one roſe from the dead. Theſe very Jews to whom our Saviour ſpoke, were remarkable inſtances of this truth: they were fully aſſured, that another Lazarus was, by the power of Chriſt, raiſed from the dead, after he had lain ſeveral days in the tomb; a fact which they were ſo far from being able to diſprove that they

attempted to kill Lazarus, as if, by this wicked action, they could have deſtroyed his evidence. Nay, they ſtill had a more lively proof in the reſurrection of Jeſus himſelf, which they were ſo far from being able to deny, that they bribed the ſoldiers to ſpread that ſenſeleſs tale, that his diſciples came by night and ſtole him away. So true were Abraham's words, that they who believe not Moſes and the prophets, which teſtify of Chriſt and his eternal redemption, would not be perſuaded, though one roſe from the dead.

There is not a more awakening and alarming example than this parable, through the whole goſpel: it is drawn in ſuch lively colours, that many, in all ages of the church have conſidered it not as a parable, but as a real hiſtory; but however this be, the important truths delivered in it are equally clear, and equally certain. They are highly inſtructive to all mankind, who, in the preſent ſtate of trial, according as they are placed, either in a high or a low condition, as they uſe or abuſe their wealth; or as the poor uſe or abuſe their poverty, ſo will they accordingly be removed after death to a ſtate of miſery, or a ſtate of happineſs.

Having thus reprimanded the Phariſees, he took occaſion to ſpeak of affronts and offences, deſcribed their evil nature, and their dreadful puniſhment. *It is impoſſible,* ſaid he, *but that offences will come: but wo unto him through whom they come. It were better for him that a mill-ſtone were hanged about his neck, and he caſt into the ſea, than that he ſhould offend one of theſe little ones,* Luke xvii. 1, 2.

He ſpake alſo againſt a quarrelſome temper in his ſervants, eſpecially in the miniſters and teachers of religion, preſcribed a ſeaſonable and prudent reprehenſion of the fault, accompanied with forgiveneſs on the part of the perſon injured, as the beſt means of diſarming the temptations that may ariſe from thence. *Take heed to yourſelves: if thy brother treſpaſs againſt thee rebuke him; and if he repent forgive him. And if he treſpaſs againſt thee ſeven times in a day, and ſeven times in a day turn to thee, ſaying, I repent, thou ſhalt forgive him,* Luke xvii. 3, 4.

It ſhould be obſerved here, that this diſcourſe on forgiveneſs, uttered at a time when the Phariſees had juſt affronted him, by calling him a falſe teacher, ſufficiently proves how truly he forgave them all the perſonal injuries they had committed againſt him; and ſhould be a powerful recommendation of that amiable virtue, the forgiveneſs of injuries.

But however beautiful theſe diſcourſes of our Saviour appear, when examined with attention, they ſeem to have ſtaggered the faith of his diſciples and followers; perhaps they ſtill imagined, that he would ſhortly erect a temporal kingdom, and diſtribute among them, the rewards they expected for their ſervices. If ſo, they might well deſire their maſter *to increaſe their faith:* as diſcourſes like theſe had a very different tendency from what might naturally have been expected from one who

was going to eſtabliſh the throne of David, and extend his ſceptre over all the kingdoms of the earth; but however this be, our Saviour told them, that if they had the ſmalleſt degree of true faith, it would be ſufficient for over-coming all temptations, even thoſe, which ſeem as difficult to be conquered as the plucking up trees, and planting them in the ocean. *If ye had faith as a grain of muſtard ſeed, ye might ſay unto this ſycamine-tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the ſea, and it ſhould obey you*, Luke xvii. 6.

CHAP. XXIV.

A meſſage ſent to Jeſus into Judea to cure Lazarus. Ten lepers are healed in Samaria; and Lazarus raiſed from the dead at Bethany.

SOON after our bleſſed Saviour had finiſhed theſe diſcourſes, one of his friends, named Lazarus, fell ſick at Bethany, a village about two miles from Jeruſalem, but at a great diſtance from the countries beyond Jordan, where Jeſus was now preaching the goſpel. The ſiſters of Lazarus finding his ſickneſs was of a dangerous kind, thought proper to ſend an account of it to Jeſus; being firmly perſuaded, that he who had cured ſo many ſtrangers would readily come and give health to one whom he loved in ſo tender a manner. "Lord, ſaid they, Behold he whom thou loveſt is ſick:" they did not add, come down and heal him, make haſte and ſave him from the grave; it was ſufficient for them to propoſe their neceſſities to their Lord, who was both able and willing to help them from their diſtreſs.

When Jeſus heard that, he ſaid, This ſickneſs is not unto death. Words which were doubtleſs carried to Martha and Mary, and muſt ſtrangely ſurpriſe them, and exerciſe both their's and his diſciples faith; ſince it is probable, that before the meſſenger arrived at Bethany, Lazarus had expired. Soon after, Jeſus poſitively aſſured his diſciples, that Lazarus was dead.

The Evangeliſt, in the beginning of this account, tells us, that Jeſus loved Martha, and her ſiſter, and Lazarus; and that after he had received the meſſage, he abode two days in the ſame place where he was. His deſign in this might be to inſinuate that his lingering ſo long after the meſſage came, did not proceed from a want of concern for his friends, but happened according to the counſels of his own wiſdom. For the length of time which Lazarus lay in the grave, put his death beyond all poſſibility of doubt, removed every ſuſpicion of fraud, and conſequently afforded Jeſus a fit opportunity of diſplaying the love he bore to Lazarus, as well as his own Almighty power, in his undoubted reſurrection from the dead. His ſiſters, indeed, were by this means kept a while in painful anxiety, on account of their brother's life, and at laſt pierced by the ſorrow of ſeeing him die: yet they muſt ſurely think themſelves abundantly

dantly recompenſed, by the evidence accruing to the goſpel from this aſtoniſhing miracle, as well as by the inexpreſſible ſurprize of joy they felt, when they again received their brother from the dead.

Two days being thus expired, Jeſus ſaid to his diſciples, *Let us go into Judea again*, John xi. 7. His diſciples were aſtoniſhed at this propoſal, and the recollection of his late danger in that country alarmed them: *Maſter*, ſaid they, *the Jews of late ſought to ſtone thee; and goeſt thou thither again?* Wilt thou hazard thy life among thoſe who deſired nothing more than to find an opportunity of killing thee. *Jeſus anſwered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he ſtumbleth not, becauſe he ſeeth the light of this world: But if a man walk in the night, he ſtumbleth, becauſe there is no light in him*, John xi. 9, 10.

By this he intended to inform his diſciples, that they had no reaſon to fear, ſeeing his day was appointed, and the light of the Almighty was in him; that he could not ſtumble nor fall, before the night of his paſſion approached, but that night was coming when no man could work. Jeſus having thus removed their groundleſs apprehenſions, and ſtrengthened their faith, that he might clearly explain to them the cauſe of his going into Judea again, told them, *Our friend Lazarus ſleepeth; but I go that I may awake him out of ſleep.* The diſciples underſtanding his diſcourſe in a literal ſenſe, replied, *Lord, if he ſleep, he ſhall do well*; his diſtemper is abated, and he in all probability is recovering. It would be, therefore, highly unreaſonable in us, to take two days journey only to awake him out of his ſleep. Thus they covered their fears, and hinted to their maſter, that it would be far ſafer to continue where they were, than to take a hazardous journey into Judea. They were, however, miſtaken; for the Evangeliſt informs us that he *ſpake of his death, but they thought that he had ſpoken of taking reſt in ſleep.* Jeſus therefore, to remove any doubts, ſaid plainly to them, *Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your ſakes, that I was not there, (to the intent that you might believe.)* I am glad for your ſakes, that I was not in Judea before he died; for had I been there, and reſtored him to his health, your faith in me, as the Meſſiah, muſt have wanted the great confirmation it ſhall now receive, by your beholding me raiſe him again from the dead.

Having thus given his diſciples a proof of his divine knowledge, and of the deſigns of Providence in the death of Lazarus, our bleſſed Saviour added, *Nevertheleſs let us go unto him.* Thus Jeſus, who could have raiſed Lazarus without opening his lips, or riſing from his ſeat, leaves his place of retirement beyond Jordan, and takes a long journey into Judea, where the Jews lately attempted to kill him; becauſe his being preſent in perſon, and raiſing Lazarus again to life, before ſo many witneſſes at Bethany, where he died, and was ſo well known, would be

be the means of bringing the men of that, and of future ages, to believe in his doctrine ſo well fitted to prepare them for a reſurrection, to eternal life; an admirable proof, as an emblem of which, he gave them in this great miracle.

Jeſus having thus declared his reſolution of returning into Judea, Thomas conceiving nothing leſs than deſtruction from ſuch a journey, yet unwilling to forſake his maſter, ſaid, *Let us alſo go that we may die with him.* Let us not forſake our maſter in this dangerous journey, but accompany him into Judea, that if the Jews, whoſe inveteracy we are well acquainted with, ſhould take away his life, we may alſo expire with him.

The journey to Judea being thus reſolved on, Jeſus departed with his diſciples, and in his way to Bethany paſſed through Samaria and Galilee. *And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men, that were lepers, which ſtood afar off: and they lifted up their voices, and ſaid, Jeſus maſter, have mercy on us. And when he ſaw them, he ſaid unto them, go ſhew yourſelves unto the prieſts; and it came to paſs, that as they went they were cleanſed.* Luke xvii. 12, *&c.*

Among theſe miſerable objects, one of them was a native of the country, who perceiving that his cure was completed, came back praiſing God for the great mercy he had received; he had before kept at a diſtance from our Saviour, but being now ſenſible that he was entirely clean, approached his benefactor, that all might have an opportunity of beholding the miracle, and fell on his face at his feet, thanking him in the moſt humble manner, for his condeſcenſion in healing him of ſo terrible a diſeaſe. Jeſus, in order to intimate, that thoſe who were enlightened with the knowledge of the truth, ought, at leaſt, to have ſhewn as great a ſenſe of piety and gratitude as this Samaritan, aſked, *were there not ten cleanſed, but where are the nine? There are not found that have returned to give glory to God, ſave this ſtranger.* Luke xvii. 17.

Jeſus and his diſciples now continued their journey towards Bethany, where he was informed by ſome of the inhabitants of that village, that Lazarus was not only dead, as he had foretold, but had now lain in the grave four days. The afflicted ſiſters were overwhelmed with ſorrow: ſo that many of the Jews from Jeruſalem came to comfort them concerning their brother.

It ſeems the news of our Lord's coming had reached Bethany, before he arrived at that village; for Martha, the ſiſter of Lazarus, being informed of his approach, went out, and met him, but Mary who was of a more melancholy and contemplative diſpoſition, ſat ſtill in the houſe. No ſooner was ſhe come into the preſence of Jeſus, than in an exceſs of grief ſhe poured forth her complaint; *Lord*, ſaid ſhe, *if thou hadſt been here, my brother had not died.* If thou hadſt complied with the meſſage we ſent thee, I well know, that thy intereſt from heaven had prevailed, my brother had been cured of his diſeaſe, and delivered from the chambers of the grave.

Martha, doubtleſs, entertained a high opinion of our Saviour's power; ſhe believed that death did not dare to approach his preſence; and, conſequently, if Jeſus had arrived at Bethany before her brother's diſſolution, he had not fallen a victim to the king of terrors. But imagined, that it was not in his power to heal the ſick at a diſtance; though, at the ſame time, ſhe ſeemed to have ſome dark and imperfect hopes, that our Bleſſed Lord would ſtill do ſomething for her. *But I know*, ſaid ſhe, *that even now whatſoever thou wilt aſk of God, God will give it thee.* She thought that Jeſus could obtain whatſoever he deſired by prayer; and therefore did not found her hopes on his power, but on the power of God, through his interceſſion. She doubtleſs knew, that the great Redeemer of mankind had raiſed the daughter of Jairus, and the widow's ſon of Nain, from the dead; but ſeems to have conſidered her brother's reſurrection as much more difficult; probably becauſe he had been longer dead.

But Jeſus, who was willing to encourage this imperfect faith of Martha, anſwered, *Thy brother ſhall riſe again.* As theſe words were delivered in an indefinite ſenſe, with regard to time, Martha underſtood them only as an argument of conſolation, drawn from the general reſurrection, and accordingly anſwered, *I know that he ſhall riſe again at the reſurrection at the laſt day.* She was firmly perſuaded of that important article of the Chriſtian Faith, the *reſurrection of the dead*; at which important hour ſhe believed her brother would riſe from the chambers of the duſt. And here ſhe ſeems to have terminated all her hopes, not thinking that the Son of God would now call her brother from the ſleep of death. Jeſus therefore, to inſtruct her in this great truth, replied, *I am the reſurrection and the life.* I am the author of the reſurrection, the fountain and giver of that life they ſhall then receive; and therefore can, with the ſame eaſe, raiſe the dead now, as at the laſt day. *He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet ſhall he live, and whoſoever liveth and believeth in me, ſhall never die. Believeſt thou this?* To which Martha anſwered, *Yea, Lord; I believe that thou art the Chriſt, the Son of God, which ſhould come into the world.* I believe that thou art the true Meſſiah, ſo long promiſed by the Prophets, and therefore believe thou art capable of performing every inſtance of power thou art pleaſed to claim.

Martha now ſeemed to entertain ſome confuſed expectations of her brother's immediate reſurrection; and leaving Jeſus in the field, ran and called her ſiſter, according to his order, being willing that both Mary and her companions ſhould be witneſſes of this ſtupendous miracle.

Mary no ſooner heard that Jeſus was come, than ſhe immediately left her Jewiſh comforters, who only increaſed the weight of her grief, and flew to her Saviour. And the Jews, who ſuſpected ſhe was going to weep over the grave of her brother, followed her to that great pro-

phet, who was going to remove all her ſorrows. Thus the Jews, who came from Jeruſalem to comfort the two mournful ſiſters, were brought to the grave of Lazarus, and made witneſſes of his reſurrection.

As ſoon as Mary approached the great Redeemer of mankind, ſhe fell proſtrate at his feet, and in a flood of tears poured out her complaint, *Lord, if thou hadſt been here, my brother had not died.* No wonder the compaſſionate Jeſus was moved at ſo affecting a ſcene: on this ſide ſtood Martha pouring forth a flood of tears, at his feet lay the affectionate Mary weeping and lamenting her dear departed brother; while the Jews, who came to comfort the afflicted ſiſters, unable to confine their grief, joined the ſolemn mourning, and mixed their friendly tears in witneſs of their love for the departed Lazarus, and in teſtimony to the juſtice of the ſiſters grief, for the loſs of ſo amiable, ſo deſerving a brother. Jeſus could not behold the affliction of the two ſiſters, and their friends, without having a ſhare in it himſelf; his heart was melted at the mournful ſcenes, *he groaned in ſpirit, and was troubled.*

But to keep them no longer in ſuſpenſe, he aſked them, where they had buried Lazarus; not that he was ignorant where the body of the deceaſed was laid: he who knew that he was dead, when ſo far diſtant from him, and could raiſe him up by a ſingle word, muſt know where his remains were depoſited; to which they anſwered, *Lord, come and ſee.* The Son of God, now to prove that he was not only God, but a moſt compaſſionate man, and to ſhew us that the tender affections of a human heart, when kept in due bounds; that friendly ſorrow, when not immoderate, and directed to proper ends, is conſiſtent with the higheſt ſanctity of the ſoul, joined in the general mourning. He wept, even at the time that he was going to give the moſt ample proof of his divinity.

By his weeping, the Jews were convinced that he loved Lazarus exceedingly: but ſome of them interpreted this circumſtance to his diſadvantage; for according to their mean way of judging, they fancied that he had ſuffered him to fall by the ſtroke of death, for no other reaſon in the world, but for want of power to reſcue him. And thinking the miracle ſaid to have been wrought on the blind men, at the feaſt of tabernacles, at leaſt as difficult as the curing an acute diſtemper, they called the former in queſtion, becauſe the latter had been neglected. *Could not this man,* ſaid they, *which opened the eyes of the blind, have cauſed that even this man ſhould not have died?*

Jeſus, however, took no notice of their queſtions, but grieving at the hardneſs of their heart, and blindneſs of their infidelity, groaned again within himſelf, as he walked towards the ſepulchre of the dead. At his coming to the grave, he ſaid, *Take ye away the ſtone. To which Martha anſwered, Lord, by this time he ſtinketh; for he hath been dead four days;* or as the paſſage may be better rendered, hath lain in the grave four days. She meant to inſinuate that her

her brother's reſurrection was not now to be expected. But Jeſus gave her a ſolemn reproof, to teach her that there was nothing impoſſible with God; and that the power of the Almighty is not to be circumſcribed within the narrow bounds of human reaſon, *Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldeſt believe, thou ſhouldeſt ſee the glory of God?*

The objections of Martha being thus obviated, ſhe, with the reſt, waited the great event in ſilence; and, in purſuance of the command of the Son of God, took away the ſtone from the place where the dead was laid. Jeſus had, on many occaſions, publickly appealed to his own miracles, as the proofs of his miſſion, though he did not generally make a formal addreſs to his Father, before he worked this miracle. But being now to raiſe Lazarus from the dead, he prayed for his reſurrection, to convince the ſpectators that it could not be effected, without an immediate interpoſition of the divine power. *Father*, ſaid he, *I thank thee, that thou haſt heard me, and I knew that thou heareſt me always: but becauſe of the people which ſtand by, I ſaid it, that they may believe that thou haſt ſent me*, John xi. 14, *&c.* I entertained no doubt of thy impowering me to do this miracle, and therefore did not pray for my own ſake; I well knew that thou heareſt me always. I prayed for the ſake of the people, to convince them that thou loveſt me, haſt ſent me, and art continually with me.

After returning thanks to his Father, for this opportunity of diſplaying his glory, *He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.* This loud and efficacious call, of the Son of God, awakened the dead; the breathleſs clay was inſtantly re-animated; and he who had lain four days in the chambers of the tomb, obeyed immediately the powerful ſound. *And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes; and his face was bound about with a napkin: Jeſus ſaid unto them, looſe him, and let him go.* It would have been the leaſt part of the miracle, had Jeſus, by his powerful word, unlooſed the napkins, wherewith Lazarus was bound; but he brought him out in the ſame manner he was lying, and ordered the ſpectators to looſe him, that they might be better convinced of the miracle; for, in taking off the grave-clothes, they had the fulleſt evidence, both of his death and reſurrection. For on the one hand, the manner in which he was ſwathed, muſt ſoon have killed him, had he been alive when buried; and conſequently demonſtrated, beyond all exception, that Lazarus had been dead ſeveral days, before Jeſus called him again to life. Beſides, in ſtripping him, the linnen offered, both to their eyes and ſmell, abundant proofs of his putrefaction; and by that means convinced them, that he had not been in a deliquium, but was really dead; on the other hand, by his lively countenance appearing, when the napkin was removed, his freſh colour, and his active vigour, they who came near, and handled him, muſt be convinced that he was in perfect

perfect health, and had an opportunity of proving the truth of the miracle, by the cloſeſt examination. There is ſomething extremely beautiful in our Lord's behaviour on this occaſion: he did not utter one upbraiding word, either to the doubting ſiſters, or the malicious Jews, nor did he let fall one word of triumph or exultation. *Looſe him, and let him go,* were the only words we have recorded. He was in this, as on all other occaſions, conſiſtent with himſelf, a pattern of perfect humility and abſolute ſelf-denial.

Such was the aſtoniſhing work wrought by the Son of God at Bethany; and in the reſurrection of Lazarus thus corrupted, and thus raiſed by the powerful call of Jeſus, we have a ſtriking emblem, and a glorious earneſt of the reſurrection of our bodies from the grave, at the laſt day; when the ſame powerful mandate which ſpoke Lazarus again into being, ſhall collect the ſcattered particles of our bodies, and raiſe them to immortality.

So remarkable a miracle performed in the neighbourhood of Jeruſalem, before a multitude of ſpectators, many of them his enemies, could not fail of being the common topic of converſation, and of producing different effects upon different perſons. Many believed that Jeſus could be no other than the great Meſſiah ſo long promiſed; while others, who ſtill expected a temporal prince, and therefore unwilling to acknowledge him for their Saviour, were filled with indignation, particularly the chief prieſts and elders. But this miracle, as well as all the reſt he had wrought in confirmation of his miſſion, was too evident to be denied: and, therefore, they pretended that his whole intention was to eſtabliſh a new ſect in religion, which would endanger both their church and nation. *Then gathered the chief prieſts, and the Phariſees a council, and ſaid, what do we? for this man doth many miracles; if we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him, and the Romans ſhall come and take away both our place and nation,* John xi. 47, *&c.*

The common people aſtoniſhed at his miracles, will, if we do not take care to prevent it, certainly ſet him up for the Meſſiah; and the Romans, under pretence of a rebellion, will deprive us both of our liberty and religion. Accordingly, they came to a reſolution to put him to death. This reſolution was not, however, unanimous; for Nicodemus, Joſeph of Aramathea, and other diſciples of our Saviour, then members of the council, urged the injuſtice of what they propoſed to do, from the conſideration of his miracles and innocence. But Caiaphas the high prieſt, from a principle of human policy, told them, that the nature of government often required certain acts of injuſtice, in order to procure the ſafety of the ſtate. *Ye know nothing at all, nor conſider that it is expedient for us, that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation periſh not.*

The council having thus determined to put Jeſus to death, deliberated for the future, only upon

the beſt methods of effecting it; and, in all probability, agreed to iſſue a proclamation, promiſing a reward to any perſon who would deliver him into their hands. For this reaſon, our bleſſed Saviour did not now go up to Jeruſalem, though he was within two miles of it; but returned to Ephraim, a city on the borders of the wilderneſs, where he abode with his diſciples, being unwilling to go too far into the country, becauſe the paſſover, at which he was to ſuffer, was now at hand.

CHAP. XXV.

Jeſus ſortelleth the deſtruction of the Jewiſh ſtate. Delivers the parables of the unjuſt judge and injured widow, and that of the Phariſee and the publican. Shews the true nature of divorce, and bleſſes the little children.

DURING our Saviour's abode in Ephraim, the Phariſees aſked him, when the kingdom of the Meſſiah was to begin. I have more than once obſerved, that the Jews had very grand ideas of the kingdom they expected this great Son of David would eſtabliſh, the number of his ſubjects, the ſtrength of his armies, and the pomp and magnificence of his court. It is therefore no wonder, that they were very deſirous of having that empire ſpeedily erected. But our Saviour, to correct this miſtaken notion, told them, that the Meſſiah's kingdom did not conſiſt in any external pomp of government, erected in ſome particular country by the terror of arms, and deſolation of war; but in the ſubjection of the minds of men, and in rendering them conformable to the laws of the Almighty, which was to be effected by a new diſpenſation of religion, and this diſpenſation was already begun. It was therefore needleſs for them to ſeek in this or that place for the kingdom of God, as it had been already preached among them by Chriſt and his apoſtles, and confirmed by innumerable miracles. *The kingdom of God*, ſaid he, *cometh not with obſervation. Neither ſhall they ſay, lo, here; or lo there: for behold, the kingdom of God is within you*, Luke xvii. 20, 21.

After ſpeaking theſe words to the Phariſees, he addreſſed himſelf to his diſciples; and, in the hearing of all the people, prophecied the deſtruction of the Jewiſh ſtate: whoſe conſtitution, both religious and civil, was the chief difficulty that oppoſed the erection of his kingdom. But becauſe love and compaſſion were eminent parts of our Saviour's temper, he mentioned that dreadful cataſtrophe in ſuch a manner as might tend to the reformation and profit of his hearers. He informed them, that the prelude to this final deſtruction would be an univerſal diſtreſs; when they ſhould paſſionately wiſh for the perſonal preſence of the Meſſiah to comfort them, but would be denied their requeſt. *The days will come, when ye ſhall deſire to ſee one of the days of the ſon of man, and ye ſhall not ſee it.* He next cautioned them againſt

deceivers, which in this time of affliction would endeavour to draw the people after them, in order to support their own power: *And they ſhall ſay to you, ſee here, or ſee there: go not after them, nor follow them. For as the lightning that lightneth out of the one part under heaven, ſhineth unto the other part under heaven; ſo ſhall alſo the ſon of man be in his day. But firſt muſt he ſuffer many things, and be rejected of this generation,* Luke xvii. 23, *&c.*

The coming of the ſon of man ſhall be ſudden and unexpected. He will come in his own ſtrength, and with great power; he will throw down all oppoſition, deſtroy his enemies with ſwift deſtruction, and eſtabliſh his religion and government in a great part of the world, as ſuddenly as lightning darts from one part of the heaven to the other. But before theſe things come to paſs, he muſt ſuffer many things, and be rejected of this generation.

But notwithſtanding this ſudden deſtruction and calamity that was to overwhelm the Jews, he told them their ſtupidity would be equal to that of the old world, at the time of the deluge, or that of Sodom before the city was deſtroyed: *And as it was in the days of Noe, ſo ſhall it be alſo in the days of the ſon of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came and deſtroyed them all. Likewiſe alſo as it was in the days of Lot, they did eat, they drank, they bought, they ſold, they planted, they builded: but the ſame day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimſtone from heaven, and deſtroyed them all: even thus ſhall it be, in the day, when the ſon of man is revealed. In that day, he which ſhall be upon the houſe-top, and his ſtuff in the houſe, let him not come down to take it away; and he that is in the field, let him likewiſe not return back. Remember Lot's wife,* Luke xvii. 26, *&c.*

A more proper example than that of Lot's wife could not have been produced; for if any of his hearers, through an immoderate love of the world, ſhould be prevailed on, in order to ſave their goods, after they were admoniſhed from heaven of their danger, by the ſigns which prognoſticated the deſtruction of Jeruſalem; or if any of them, thro' want of faith, ſhould think, that the calamities predicted to fall on the nation would not be either ſo great or ſudden as he had declared, and did not uſe the precaution of a ſpeedy flight; they might behold in Lot's wife an example both of their ſin, and of their puniſhment. He added, that thoſe who endeavoured to ſave their lives, by fleeing into the city, ſhould meet the deſtruction they were endeavouring to avoid; whereas, thoſe who retired into the open towns, and defenceleſs villages, ſhould be ſafe. *Whoſoever ſhall ſeek to ſave his life, ſhall loſe it; and whoſoever ſhall loſe his life ſhall preſerve it,* Luke xvii. 33.

After making theſe predictions, our bleſſed Saviour ſpake the following parable, in order to excite them to a conſtant perſeverance in prayer,

and not to be ſo weary and faint in their minds, as to neglect, or wholly omit this neceſſary duty.

There was in a city, ſaid the Saviour of the world, a judge, who being governed by atheiſtical principles, had no regard to the precepts of religion, and being very powerful did not regard what was ſaid of him by man; ſo that all his deciſions were influenced merely by paſſion or intereſt. In the ſame city was alſo a widow, who, having no friends to aſſiſt her, was abſolutely unable to defend herſelf from injuries, or procure redreſs for any ſhe had received. In this deplorable ſituation ſhe had recourſe to the unjuſt judge, in order to obtain ſatisfaction for ſome oppreſſive wrong ſhe had lately received: but the judge was ſo abandoned to pleaſure, that he refuſed, for a time, to liſten to her requeſt; he would not give himſelf the trouble to examine her caſe, though the crying injuſtice pleaded ſo powerfully for this diſtreſſed widow. She was not, however, intimidated by his refuſal; ſhe inceſſantly importuned him, till, by repeated repreſentations of her diſtreſs, ſhe filled his mind with ſuch diſpleaſing ideas, that he was obliged to do her juſtice, merely to free himſelf from her importunity. *Tho'*, ſaid he to himſelf, *I fear not God, nor regard man; yet, becauſe this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, leſt, by her continual coming, ſhe weary me*, Luke xviii. 4, 5.

The ſentiment conveyed by our bleſſed Saviour, in this parable is very beautiful. We hence learn, that the cries of the afflicted will, by being inceſſantly repeated, make an impreſſion, even on the ſtony hearts of wicked men, who glory in their impiety, and laugh at all the precepts of juſtice, virtue, and religion: and, therefore, cannot fail of being regarded by the benevolent Father of the univerſe, who will liſten to the petitions of his faithful ſervants, and pour on their heads the choiceſt of his bleſſings.

Hear, ſaid the bleſſed Jeſus, *what the unjuſt judge ſaith: and ſhall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with him? I tell you, that he will avenge them ſpeedily*, Luke xviii. 6, *&c.* Arguments of this kind taken from the feeble goodneſs, or even from the imperfections of men, to illuſtrate the ſuperior and infinite perfections of the Almighty, were often made uſe of by the bleſſed Jeſus, and with great ſucceſs in working the conviction deſigned. It was indeed hardly poſſible to withſtand ſuch powerful appeals; they force their way directly into men's hearts, bear down all oppoſition, and make a laſting impreſſion.

Our bleſſed Saviour having thus inforced the duty of prayer, in this expreſſive parable, aſked the following appoſite queſtion, *Nevertheleſs, when the ſon of man cometh, ſhall he find faith on the earth?* As if he had ſaid, notwithſtanding all the miracles I have wrought, and the excellent doctrines I have delivered, ſhall I find, at my ſecond coming, the faith among the children of men there is reaſon to expect? Will not moſt of them be found to have abandoned

abandoned the faith, and wantonly aſk, *where is the promiſe of his coming?*

Having delivered theſe diſcourſes, the bleſſed Jeſus next addreſſed himſelf to thoſe who were righteous in their own conceit, and deſpiſed others. But as theſe particulars are better illuſtrated by their oppoſites, he placed the character of this ſpecies of men, in oppoſition to thoſe of the humble; deſcribing the reception each claſs met with from the Almighty in the parable of the Phariſee and publican, who went up together to the temple at the time when the ſacrifice was offered, to direct their petitions to the God of their fathers.

The Phariſee, having a high opinion of his own righteouſneſs, went far into the court of the temple, that he might be as near the place of the divine reſidence as poſſible. Here he offered his prayer, giving God the praiſe of his ſuppoſed righteouſneſs; and had he been poſſeſſed of any, he would have acted properly. *God*, ſaid he, *I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjuſt, adulterers, or even as this publican. I faſt twice in the week, I give tythes of all that I poſſeſs.* Having thus commended himſelf to God, he wrapped himſelf up in his own righteouſneſs; and giving the poor publican a ſcornful look, walked away, perhaps to tranſgreſs ſome of the weightier matters of the law, judgment, juſtice, and truth, and to devour the houſes of diſtreſſed widows and helpleſs orphans. But how different was the behaviour of the humble publican! Impreſſed with a deep ſenſe of his own unworthineſs, he would not even enter the courts of the temple; but ſtanding afar off, he *ſmote upon his breaſt*, and in the bitterneſs of his ſoul, earneſtly implored the mercy of Omnipotence: *And the publican, ſtanding afar off, would not lift up ſo much as his eyes unto heaven, but ſmote upon his breaſt; ſaying, Lord, be merciful unto me a ſinner*, Luke xviii. 13.

I tell you, ſaid our bleſſed Saviour, however ye may judge from external appearances, and whatever preference ye may give to this haughty Phariſee; I, who know, and ſee the heart, declare unto you, that the publican retired from the temple accepted by his God, and bleſſed with the mercy which he implored, while the proud Phariſee was diſregarded.

The preſent parable ſufficiently indicates, that all the ſons of men ſtand in need of mercy: both the ſtrict Phariſee and the deſpiſed publican, with the whole race of mankind, are ſinners; and conſequently all muſt implore pardon of their benevolent Creator. We muſt all aſcend to the temple, and there pour forth our prayers before the throne of grace; for there he has promiſed ever to be preſent, to grant the petitions of all who aſk, with ſincerity and truth.

Theſe parables were ſpoken in the town of Ephraim; and during his continuance in that city, the Phariſees asked him, Whether he thought it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cauſe? Our Saviour had twice before declared his opinion

of

of this particular, once in Galilee, and once in Perea; it is therefore probable, that the Phariſees were not ignorant of his ſentiments, and that they asked the queſtion then, to find an opportunity of incenſing the people againſt him, well knowing that the Iſraelites held the liberty which the law gave them of divorcing their wives as one of their chief privileges: but however that be, Jeſus was far from fearing the popular reſentment, and accordingly declared the third time againſt arbitrary divorces. The Phariſees then asked him, why they were commanded by Moſes to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? inſinuating, that Moſes was ſo tender of their happineſs, that he gave them liberty of putting away their wives, when they ſaw occaſion. To which Jeſus anſwered, Becauſe of the hardneſs of your hearts, Moſes ſuffered you to put away your wives; but from the beginning it was not ſo. As unlimited divorces were not permitted in the ſtate of innocence, ſo neither ſhall they be under the goſpel diſpenſation. *And I ſay unto you, Whoſoever ſhall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and ſhall marry another, committeth adultery. And whoſo marrieth her that is put away, doth commit adultery*, Matt. xix. 9.

The diſciples were greatly ſurpriſed at their Maſter's deciſion; and tho' they held their peace, while the Phariſees were preſent, yet they did not fail to ask him the reaſon on which he founded his determination, when they were returned home. *And in the houſe his diſciples aſked him again of the ſame matter; and he ſaith unto them, Whoſoever ſhall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery againſt her. And if a woman put away huſband, and be married to another, ſhe committeth adultery*, Mark x. 10.

The practice of unlimitted divorces, which prevailed among the Jews gave great encouragement to family-quarrels, were very deſtructive of happineſs, and hindered the education of their common offſpring. Beſides, it greatly tended to make their children loſe that reverence for them which is due to parents, as it was hardly poſſible for the children to avoid engaging in the quarrel. Our Lord's prohibition, therefore, of theſe divorces is founded on the ſtrongeſt reaſons, and greatly tends to promote the welfare of ſociety.

Our Saviour having, in the courſe of his miniſtry, performed innumerable cures in different parts of the country, ſeveral perſons thinking, perhaps, that his power would be as great in preventing as in removing diſtempers, brought their children to him, deſiring that he would put his hands upon them and bleſs them. The diſciples, however, miſtaking the intention, were angry with the perſons, and rebuked them, for endeavouring to give this trouble to their maſter. But Jeſus no ſooner ſaw it, than he was greatly diſpleaſed with his diſciples, and ordered them not to hinder parents from bringing their children to him. *Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for ſuch is the kingdom of God*, Luke xviii. 16.

That

That is, the church militant on earth, and that triumphant in heaven, are compoſed of perſons who reſemble little children in humility and meekneſs. Accordingly he took them up in his arms, and with his uſual benevolence bleſſed them.

CHAP. XXVI.

Our Saviour departs from Ephraim. Declares the means of inheriting eternal life. Delivers the parable of the labourers in the vineyard. Foretells his own ſuffering a fourth time; and his diſciples again ſtrive for the chief poſts in his kingdom.

AS the time of our Saviour's paſſion now drew near, he departed from Ephraim, and repaired by the way of Jericho, towards Jeruſalem: but before he arrived at Jericho, a ruler of the ſynagogue came running to him, and kneeling down before him, asked him, *Good Maſter, what good things ſhall I do, that I may inherit eternal life?* Matt xix. 16. Though this young ruler pretended to pay great honour to our dear Redeemer, yet the whole was no more than a piece of hypocriſy. For though he ſtiled him *good*, yet he did not believe that he was ſent from God, as ſufficiently appears from his refuſing to obſerve the counſel given him by Jeſus; nor could his artful inſinuations eſcape the piercing eye of the great Saviour of the world. He well knew his ſecret intentions, and beheld the inmoſt receſſes of his ſoul; and accordingly rebuked him for his hypocritical addreſs, before he anſwered his queſtion. *Why calleſt thou me good? There is none good but one, that is God*, Matt. xix. 17. But as he had deſired the advice of the bleſſed Jeſus, who never refuſed it to any of the ſons of men, he readily anſwered his queſtion; by telling him, that he muſt obſerve all the moral precepts of the law; there being a neceſſary connexion between the duties of piety towards the Almighty, and of juſtice and temperance towards men, the latter of which were much more difficult to counterfeit than the former. *If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. He ſaith unto him, which? Jeſus ſaid, Thou ſhalt do no murder; Thou ſhalt not commit adultery; Thou ſhalt not ſteal; Thou ſhalt not bear falſe witneſs: Honour thy father and mother: And thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thyſelf. The young man ſaith unto him, all theſe things have I kept from my youth, up: what lack I yet?* Matt. xix. 17, &c.

The young ruler, doubtleſs, underſtood theſe commandments in the vague ſenſe put upon them by the doctors and interpreters of the law; and, therefore, the character he here gave of himſelf might be very juſt. For, though he was far from being a perſon of true probity and virtue, he might have appeared, in the ſight of men, as a perſon of a very fair character. And having maintained that character, notwithſtanding his great riches, he certainly deſerved commendation; and therefore might be loved by that benevolent perſon who left the boſſom of his Father, to redeem

redeem loſt mankind. But he was, at the ſame time very faulty, with regard to his love of ſenſual pleaſures: a ſin which might have eſcaped even his own obſervation, tho' it could not eſcape the all-ſeeing eye of the Son of God. Our bleſſed Saviour therefore, willing to make him ſenſible of this ſecret deſire of poſſeſſing the riches of this world, told him, that if he aimed at perfection, he ſhould diſtribute his poſſeſſions among the poor and indigent, and become his diſciple. *If thou wilt be perfect, go and ſell that thou haſt, and give to the poor, and thou ſhalt have treaſure in heaven: and come and follow me*, Matt. xix. 21.

This condition was not expected by him; it aſtoniſhed the young man, who, without making the leaſt reply, retired, filled with ſorrow, being very unwilling to part with his large eſtates. *But when the young man heard that ſaying, he went away ſorrowful: for he had great poſſeſſions*, Matt. xix. 22.

This melancholy inſtance of the pernicious influence of riches over the minds of the children of men, induced our bleſſed Saviour to caution his diſciples againſt fixing their minds on things of ſuch frightful tendency, by ſhewing how very difficult it was for a rich man to procure an habitation in the regions of eternal happineſs. *Verily, I ſay unto you, that a rich man ſhall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I ſay unto you, It is eaſier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. When his diſciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, ſaying, who then can be ſaved? But Jeſus beheld them, and ſaid unto them, With men this is impoſſible, but with God all things are poſſible*, Matt. xix. 23, *&c.*

If man be not aſſiſted by the grace of God, it will be impoſſible for him to obtain the happy rewards of the kingdom of heaven; but, by the aſſiſtance of grace, which the Almighty never refuſes to thoſe who ſeek it with their whole heart, it is very poſſible.

This anſwer of the bleſſed Jeſus was, however, far from ſatisfying his diſciples, who had, doubtleſs, often reflected with pleaſure on the high poſts they were to enjoy in their Maſter's kingdom. Peter ſeems particularly to have been diſappointed; and therefore addreſſed his maſter in the name of the reſt, begging him to remember, that his apoſtles had actually done what the young man had refuſed. They had abandoned their relations, their friends, their poſſeſſions, and their employments, on his account: and, therefore, deſired to know what reward they were to expect, for theſe inſtances of their obedience. To which Jeſus replied, That they ſhould not fail of a reward, even in this life; for immediately after his reſurrection, when he aſcended to his Father, and entered on his mediatorial office, they ſhould be advanced to the honour of judging the twelve tribes of Iſrael; that is, of ruling the church of Chriſt, which they were to plant in different parts of the earth. *Verily I ſay unto you, that*

ye which have followed me in the regeneration, when the ſon of man ſhall ſit in the throne of his glory, ye alſo ſhall ſit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Iſrael, Matt. xix. 28.

Having given this anſwer to Peter, he next mentioned the rewards his other diſciples ſhould receive, both in this world and in that which is to come. They, ſaid he, who have forſaken all for my ſake, ſhall be no loſers in the end: their benevolent Father, who intends to give them poſſeſſions in the heavenly Canaan, will not fail to ſupport them, during their long and painful journey to that happy country; and raiſe them up friends who ſhall aſſiſt them with thoſe neceſſaries they might have expected from their relations, had they not left them for my ſake. Divine Providence will take care that they have every thing valuable that can be given them by their relations, or they could deſire from large poſſeſſions. They ſhall, indeed, be fed with the bread of ſorrow; but this ſhall produce joys, to which all the earthly pleaſures bear no proportion; and, in the end, obtain everlaſting life. They ſhall leave this vale of tears, with all its pains and ſorrows behind them, and fly to the boſom of their Almighty Father, the fountain of life and joy, where they ſhall be infinitely rewarded for all the ſufferings they have undergone in this world.

Thus ſhall many, who are, by their fellow mortals, conſidered as the laſt of mankind, becauſe of their ſufferings, ſelf-denials, and mortifications, be really firſt, not only in point of future reward, but even with regard to preſent ſatisfaction. *But many that are firſt ſhall be laſt; and the laſt ſhall be firſt*, Matt. xix. 30.

Theſe words ſeem alſo to have been ſpoken to keep the diſciples humble; for in all probability they at firſt underſtood the promiſe of their ſitting on twelve thrones in a natural ſenſe; as they were ready to conſtrue every expreſſion to a temporal kingdom, which they ſtill expected their maſter would erect upon earth. Our bleſſed Saviour, therefore, to remove all thoughts they might entertain of this kind, told them, that though he had deſcribed the rewards they were to expect for the ready obedience they had ſhewn to his commands, and the pains they were to take in propagating the goſpel among the children of men; yet theſe rewards were ſpiritual, and not confined to the Jews alone, but extended alſo to the Gentiles, who, in point of time ſhould excel the Jews, and univerſally embrace the goſpel before that nation was converted.

This doctrine our bleſſed Saviour illuſtrated with the parable of the houſholder, who, at different hours of the day, hired labourers to work in his vineyard. *The kingdom of heaven*, ſays our bleſſed Saviour, *is like unto a houſholder, who went out early in the morning, to hire labourers to work in his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a-day, he ſent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour, and ſaw others ſtanding idle in*

the market-place, and ſaid unto them, go ye alſo into the vineyard, and whatſoever is right I will give you. And they went their way. Again he went out about the ſixth and ninth hour, and did likewiſe. And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others ſtanding idle, and ſaith unto them, why ſtand ye here all the day idle? They ſay unto him, becauſe no man hath hired us. He ſaith unto them, Go ye alſo into the vineyard, and whatſoever is right, that ſhall ye receive. So, when even was come, the Lord of the vineyard ſaid unto his ſteward, call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the laſt, unto the firſt. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. But when the firſt came, they thought they ſhould have received more; and they likewiſe received every man a penny. And when they had received it, they murmured againſt the good man of the houſe, ſaying, theſe laſt have wrought but one hour, and thou haſt made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. But he anſwered one of them, and ſaid, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didſt thou not agree with me for a penny? take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this laſt even as unto thee, is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil becauſe I am good? So the laſt ſhall be firſt, and the firſt laſt; for many be called, but few choſen, Matt. xx. 1, 2, 3, &c.

Such is the parable of the houſholder, as delivered by our Saviour; and, from the application he has made of it, it would not be difficult to interpret it. The diſpenſations of religion which God gave to mankind in different parts of the world, are repreſented by the vineyard. The Jews, who were early members of the true church, and obliged to obey the law of Moſes, are the labourers which the houſholder hired early in the morning. The Gentiles, who were converted at ſeveral times, by the various interpoſitions of Providence, to the knowledge and worſhip of the true God, are the labourers hired at the third, ſixth, and ninth hour. And the invitation given at the eleven hour, implies the calling of the Gentiles in every country, to live piouſly and virtuouſly. The law of Moſes was a heavy yoke; and therefore the obedience to its precepts was very elegantly repreſented, by bearing the heat and burden of the whole day. But the proſelyted Gentiles paid obedience only to ſome particular precepts of the law; bore but part of its weight; and were therefore repreſented by thoſe who were hired at the third, ſixth, and ninth hours: while thoſe heathens, who regulated their conduct by the law of nature only, and eſteemed the works of juſtice, piety, temperance, and charity as their whole duty, are beautifully repreſented as labouring only one hour in the cool of the evening.

When the evening was come, and each labourer was to receive his wages, they were all placed on an equal footing; theſe rewards being the privileges and advantages of the goſpel. The Jews, who had borne the grievous yoke of the Moſaic

ceremonies, murmured when they found the Gentiles were admitted to its privileges, without being ſubject to their ceremonial worſhip. But we muſt not urge the circumſtance of the reward, ſo far as to fancy that either Jews or Gentiles merited the bleſſings of the goſpel, by their having laboured faithfully in the vineyard, or having behaved well under their ſeveral diſpenſations. The goſpel, with its bleſſings, was beſtowed entirely by the free grace of God, and without any thing in men to merit it; beſides, it was offered promiſcuouſly to all, whether good or bad, and was embraced by perſons of all characters. The concluſion of the parable deſerves our utmoſt attention; we ſhould often meditate upon it, and take care to make our calling and election ſure.

After Jeſus had finiſhed theſe diſcourſes, he continued his journey towards Jeruſalem, where the chief prieſts and elders, ſoon after the reſurrection of Lazarus, iſſued a proclamation, promiſing a reward to any one who ſhould apprehend him. In all probability, this was the reaſon, why the diſciples were aſtoniſhed at the alacrity of our Lord, during this journey, while they themſelves followed him trembling. Jeſus, therefore, thought proper to repeat the prophecies concerning his ſufferings, in order to ſhew his diſciples that they were entirely voluntary; adding, that though the Jews ſhould put him to death, yet, inſtead of weakening, it ſhould increaſe their faith, eſpecially as he would riſe again the third day from the dead. Behold, we go up to Jeruſalem; and all things that are written by the prophets, concerning the ſon of man, ſhall be accompliſhed: *For he ſhall be delivered to the Gentiles, and ſhall be mocked, and ſpitefully entreated and ſpitted on: And they ſhall ſcourge him, and put him to death: and the third day he ſhall riſe again,* Luke xviii. 32, *&c.*

As this prediction was built upon the ancient prophecies, it muſt have given the greateſt encouragement to his diſciples, had they underſtood and applied it in the proper manner; but they were ſo ignorant in the ſcriptures, that they had no idea of what he meant: *And they underſtood none of thoſe things: and this ſaying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were ſpoken,* Mark x. 34.

The ſons of Zebedee were ſo ignorant, that they thought their maſter, by his telling them he would riſe again from the dead, meant that he would then erect his empire; and accordingly begged that he would confer on them the chief poſts in his kingdom; which they expreſſed, by deſiring to be ſeated the one, *on his right hand, and the other on his left*, in alluſion to his placing the twelve apoſtles upon twelve thrones, judging the tribes of Iſrael.

The ſons of Zebedee, ever ſince our Saviour's transfiguration, had conceived very high notions of his kingdom, and poſſibly of their own merit alſo, becauſe they had been admitted to behold that miracle. But Jeſus told them, they were ignorant of the nature of the honour they requeſted; and ſince they deſired to

ſhare with him in his glory, aſked them, if they were willing to ſhare with him alſo in his ſufferings: *Ye know not what ye aſk, are ye able to drink of the cup that I ſhall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptiſm that I am baptized with?* Matt. xx. 22. The two diſciples, raviſhed with the proſpect of the dignity they were aſpiring after, replied without heſitation, that they were both able and willing, to ſhare any hardſhip their Maſter might meet with in the way to his kingdom. To which he anſwered, that they ſhould certainly ſhare with him his troubles and afflictions; but that they had asked a favour which was not his to give. *Ye ſhall, indeed, drink of my cup, and be baptized with the baptiſm that I am baptized with; but to ſit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it ſhall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father,* Matt. xx. 23.

This ambitious requeſt of the two brothers raiſed the indignation of the reſt of the diſciples; who, thinking themſelves equally deſerving the principal poſts in the Meſſiah's kingdom, were highly offended at the arrogance of the ſons of Zebedee. Jeſus, therefore, in order to reſtore harmony among his diſciples, told them, that his kingdom was very different from thoſe of the preſent world; and that the greatneſs of his diſciples did not, like that of ſecular princes, conſiſt in reigning over others in an abſolute and deſpotic manner. *Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exerciſe dominion over them, and they that are great, exerciſe authority upon them. But it ſhall not be ſo among you: but whoſoever will be great among ye, let him be your miniſter. And whoſoever will be chief among you, let him be your ſervant; even as the ſon of man came not to be miniſtred unto, but to miniſter, to give his life a ranſom for many,* Matt. xx. 25, &c.

CHAP. XXVII.

Jeſus cureth two blind beggars near Jericho. Viſits Zaccheus the publican. Delivers the parable of the ſervants entruſted with their Lord's money. Is anointed by Mary in Bethany, and enters Jeruſalem in a public manner.

JESUS, with his diſciples and the multitude that accompanied him, were now arrived at Jericho, a famous city of Paleſtine, and the ſecond in the kingdom. Near this town Jeſus cured two blind men, who ſat by the road begging, and expreſſed their belief in him, as the Meſſiah. *And as they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed him. And behold, two blind men ſitting by the way ſide, when they heard that Jeſus paſſed by, cryed out, ſaying, have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David. And the multitude rebuked them, becauſe they ſhould hold their peace: but they cried the more, ſaying, have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David,* Matt. xx. 29, &c.

This importunate requeſt had its deſired effect on the Son of God. He ſtood ſtill, and called them to him, that, by their manner of walking, ſpectators might be convinced

vinced that they were really blind. As ſoon as they approached him, he aſked them, what they requeſted with ſuch earneſtneſs? To which the beggars anſwered, that they might receive their ſight. *What will ye, that I ſhall do unto you? They ſay Lord, that our eyes may be opened.* This requeſt was not made in vain. Their compaſſionate Saviour touched their eyes, and immediately they received ſight, and followed him, glorifying and praiſing God. After conferring ſight on theſe beggars, Zaccheus, chief of the publicans, having often heard the fame of our Saviour's miracles, was deſirous of ſeeing his perſon; but the lowneſs of his ſtature preventing him from ſatisfying his curioſity, *he ran before and climbed up a ſycamore-tree to ſee him, for he was to paſs that way.* As Jeſus approached the place where he was, *he looked up, and ſaw him, and ſaid unto him, Zaccheus make haſte and come down, for to-day I muſt abide in thy houſe,* Luke xix. 5.

The publican expreſſed his joy at our Lord's condeſcending to viſit him, carried him to his houſe, and ſhewed him all the marks of civility in his power. But the people, when they ſaw he was going to the houſe of a publican, condemned his conduct, as not conformable to the character of a prophet. Zaccheus ſeems to have heard theſe unjuſt reflections; and therefore was willing to juſtify himſelf, before Jeſus and his attendants. *And Zaccheus ſtood, and ſaid unto the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man, by falſe accuſation, I reſtore him four fold. And Jeſus ſaid unto him, this day is ſalvation come to this houſe, foraſmuch as he alſo is the Son of Abraham,* Luke xix. 8, &c.

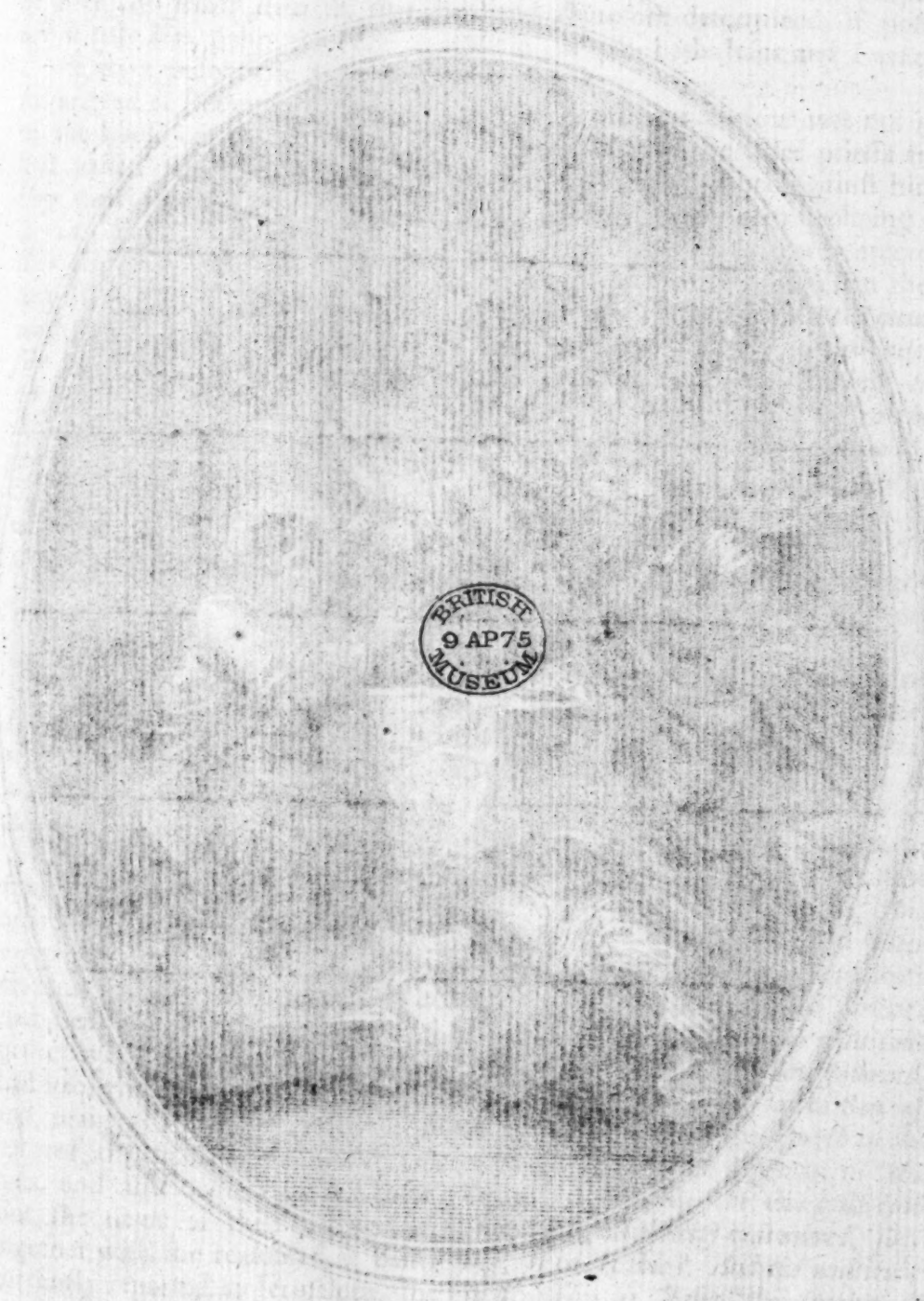
Our Saviour, further to convince the people that he acted agreeable to his character, in keeping company with publicans and ſinners, told them, that the true intention of his coming was to recover thoſe who had wandered from the paths of virtue, and reſtore them to God the rightful owner. *The ſon of man is come to ſeek and to ſave that which is loſt.* While Jeſus continued in the houſe of Zaccheus the publican, he ſpake a parable to his followers, who ſuppoſed, at his arrival in the royal city, he would erect the long expected kingdom of the Meſſiah. *A certain nobleman,* ſaid he, *went into a far country to receive for himſelf a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten ſervants, and delivered to them ten pounds, and ſaid unto them, occupy till I come. But his citizens hated him, and ſent a meſſage after him, ſaying, We will not have this man to reign over us. And it came to paſs, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom; then he commanded theſe ſervants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. Then came the firſt, ſaying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. And he ſaid unto him, well, thou good ſervant, becauſe thou haſt been faithful over very little, have thou authority over ten cities. And the ſecond came, ſaying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five*

five pounds; and he ſaid likewiſe to him, be thou alſo over five cities. And another came, ſaying, Lord, here is thy pound, which I kept laid up in a napkin; for I feared thee, becauſe thou art an auſtere man: thou takeſt up that thou layedſt not down, and reapeſt that thou didſt not ſow. And he ſaid unto him, out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked ſervant. Thou kneweſt that I was an auſtere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not ſow: wherefore then gaveſt not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming, I might have required mine own with uſury? And he ſaid unto them that ſtood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds (and they ſaid unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.) For I ſay unto you, That unto every one which hath, ſhall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath ſhall be taken away from him. But thoſe, mine enemies, which would not that I ſhould reign over them, bring hither, and ſlay them before me, Luke xix. 12, *&c.*

In this parable we have the characters of three ſorts of men, delineated by our bleſſed Saviour himſelf; namely, the true diſciples of the Meſſiah; the hypocrites, and the openly prophane. And the treatment theſe ſervants met with repreſents the final ſentences that will be paſſed upon them, by the aweful judge of the whole earth. The true diſciples ſhall be rewarded with the honours and pleaſures of immortality; the hypocrites ſtripped of all the advantages they ſo often boaſted, and loaded with eternal infamy; and the open enemies of Chriſt ſhall ſuffer puniſhment, ſevere in proportion to the degree of their guilt.

But though this be the general ſenſe of the parable, yet it has alſo a particular relation to the time when it was ſpoken; and intended to teach the diſciples, that though they might imagine that the Meſſiah's kingdom was ſpeedily to be erected, and they were ſoon to partake of its happineſs, yet this was not to happen before the death of their maſter; that they themſelves muſt perform a long and laborious courſe of ſervices, before they received their eternal reward. That after his reſurrection, when he had obtained the kingdom, he would return from his ſeat of majeſty, and reckon with all his ſervants, and reward every one according to the improvements he had made in the truſt committed to his care: and that he would execute, in an exemplary manner, his vengeance on thoſe who refuſed to let him reign over them, and did all in their power to hinder the erection of his kingdom among others. After ſpeaking this parable, Jeſus left the houſe of Zaccheus the publican, and continued his journey towards Jeruſalem, where he propoſed to celebrate the paſſover; and was earneſtly expected by the people, who came up to purify themſelves, and who began to doubt whether he would venture to come to the feaſt. This delay, however, was occaſioned by the proclamation iſſued by the chief prieſts, promiſing a reward to any one who would diſcover the place

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Mary anointing Jesus's Feet. **Luke VII.**

of his retirement. *Now the chief prieſts and Phariſees had given a commandment, that if any knew where he were, he ſhould ſhew it, that they might take him,* John xi. 57.

Six days before the paſſover, Jeſus arrived at Bethany, and repaired to the houſe of Lazarus, whom he had raiſed from the dead. *There they made him a ſupper, and Martha ſerved; but Lazarus was one of them that ſate at the table with him. Then took Mary a pound of ointment of ſpikenard, very coſtly, and anointed the feet of Jeſus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the houſe was filled with the odour of the ointment. Then ſaith one of his diſciples, Judas Iſcariot, Simon's ſon, which ſhould betray him, why was not this ointment ſold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he ſaid, not that he cared for the poor, but becauſe he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein. Then ſaid Jeſus, Let her alone; againſt the day of my burying hath ſhe kept this. For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always,* John xii. 2, &c.

As Bethany was not above two miles from Jeruſalem, the news of his arrival was ſoon ſpread through the capital, and great numbers of the citizens came to ſee Lazarus, who had been raiſed from the dead, together with the great prophet who had wrought ſo ſtupendous a miracle; and many of them were convinced both of the reſurrection of the former, and the divinity of the latter. But the news of their converſion, together with the reaſon of it being currently reported in Jeruſalem, the chief prieſts were ſoon ſenſible of the weight ſo great a miracle muſt have on the minds of the people; and therefore determined, if poſſible, to put both Jeſus and Lazarus to death.

Though our Saviour was not ignorant of what the chief prieſts and elders had determined againſt him, yet he was ſo far from declining to viſit Jeruſalem, that he even entered it in a public manner. When they *were come to Bethphage, unto the mount of olives, then ſent Jeſus two diſciples, ſaying unto them, Go into the village over-againſt you, and ſtraightway ye ſhall find an aſs tied, and a colt with her: looſe them, and bring them unto me. And if any man ſay ought unto you, ye ſhall ſay, The Lord hath need of them; and ſtraightway he will ſend them. All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was ſpoken by the prophet, ſaying, tell the daughter of Sion, Behold thy king cometh unto thee, meek, and ſitting upon an aſs, and a colt the fole of an aſs. And the diſciples went, and did as Jeſus commanded them, and brought the aſs, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and ſet him thereon. And a very great multitude ſpread their garments in the way: others cut down branches from the trees, and ſtrewed them in the way. And the multitude that went before, and that followed, cried, ſaying, Hoſanna to the Son of David: bleſſed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord, Hoſanna in the higheſt. And when he was come into Jeruſalem, all the city was moved, ſaying, Who is this? And the multitude ſaid, This is Jeſus the prophet of Nazareth*

Nazareth of Galilee, Matt. xxi. 1, 2, 3, *&c.*

There is no circumſtance relating the Meſſiah that has given occaſion to more profane wit and ridicule, than this now before us: we reckon an aſs to be a contemptible creature, and a man, eſpecially a man of character, riding upon an aſs, a ridiculous figure. Theſe are prejudices of our own times and country. And when they, who look no farther than the manners and cuſtoms before them, examine this part of the ſacred ſtory by the ſtandard of modern prejudices, they ſee, or think they ſee, ſomething quite inconſiſtent with the gravity and dignity of the perſon, pretending to be the king of the Jews, when Chriſt is repreſented entering in triumph into Jeruſalem, ſitting on an aſs. But however contemptible an aſs, or a man riding on that creature may be at preſent, it was not ſo from the beginning. In many countries, and particularly in Judea, perſons of the higheſt diſtinction uſually rode upon aſſes. The governors of Iſrael are deſcribed in the ſong of Deborah, as *riding on white aſſes*, Judg. v. 10. And the thirty ſons of Jair, who was judge and prince over Iſrael twenty-two years, are ſaid to ride on thirty aſſes, Judg. x. 4. And another judge is recorded to have had forty ſons, and thirty nephews, that rode on ſeventy aſs colts, Judg. xii. 14.

It may, however be asked, that ſuppoſing it was an uſual thing to ride on an aſs, why ſhould this common practice be mentioned in relation to the Meſſiah, as a mark of diſtinction? Might not the prophet upon this ſuppoſition as well have ſaid, he ſhall come walking on foot? And would he not have been as well known by one character as by the other? Beſides, if we turn to the book of Zachariah, where this prophecy is to be found, we ſhall ſee the perſon there deſcribed to be a king, a juſt king, and one having ſalvation: and what is there in this character of riding on the foſe of an aſs, that is peculiar to a king, to a juſt king, and to one who was to bring ſalvation and deliverance to his people?

Theſe queſtions, however difficult they may at firſt ſight appear, are eaſily anſwered, not by conſidering the ſtate and condition of kings in general, but that peculiar to a king of Iſrael, on which the propriety of this character is founded.

If we look into the hiſtory of the riſe and fall of nations, we ſhall generally find, that their proſperity and ſucceſs were proportional to their force and power, and to the conduct and ability of their leaders. But with the Jews, who from ſlaves in Egypt became a powerful people, the caſe was very different. The beſt and greateſt of their kings, and he who carried their empire to its greateſt height, has left us another account of their affairs: *The people*, ſays he, *got not the land into poſſeſſion by their own ſword, neither did their own arm ſave them: but thy right hand, and thine arms, and the light of thy countenance, becauſe thou hadſt a favour unto them*, Pſalm xliv. 3, *&c.*

When we read theſe, and other ſimilar

ſimilar paſſages, we are apt to aſcribe them to the piety and devotion of the Pſalmiſt, to conſider them only as acknowledgments of God's general providence in the affairs of the world, and hence are apt to overlook, or not ſufficiently conſider, the hiſtorical truth they contain. It is true, indeed, that all ſucceſs in the ſtricteſt ſenſe, may be aſcribed to God; that it is he who giveth victory unto kings; but he generally makes uſe of natural means, and it is no offence to his providence, that kings liſt their thouſands of horſe and foot, to ſecure themſelves and their dominions. But with the Jews it was very different: they were never ſo weak as when they made themſelves ſtrong; never ſo certainly ruined, as when their force was great enough to create a confidence in themſelves. For God had taken the defence of Iſrael upon himſelf; and, whenever the people took it out of his hands, to place it in their own, they were ſure to be undone.

Nay, ſo tender was God of his honour in this reſpect, and ſo concerned to juſtify his promiſe to protect Iſrael in the eyes of the world, that he would not always permit natural cauſes to interfere in their deliverance, leſt the people ſhould grow doubtful to whom they ought to aſcribe their victories; and for the ſame reaſon it was, that he commanded the people to have neither horſes nor chariots of war for their defence. Not becauſe they were thought uſeleſs in war, for it is well known that they were the ſtrength of the ancient kingdoms, but becauſe God himſelf had undertaken their defence, and he wanted neither horſe nor foot to fight their battles.

This law, as is evident from the Jewiſh hiſtory, was obſerved for near four hundred years; namely, till about the middle of Solomon's reign. And while David ſwayed the ſceptre of Iſrael, when the kingdom was carried to its utmoſt height, he himſelf rode upon a mule, and provided no better equipage for his ſon, on the day of his coronation. *Cauſe Solomon my ſon*, ſaid David, *to ride upon mine own mule, and bring him down to Gihon; and let Zadock the prieſt and Nathan the prophet, anoint him there king over Iſrael*, 1 Kings. i. 33, 34. And when that pious prince looked back, and contemplated this ſtate of things, he might well ſay, *Some truſt in chariots, and ſome in horſes, but we will remember the name of the Lord our God*, Pſal. xx. 7.

In the reign of Solomon, things quickly changed their aſpect. He married the daughter of the king of Egypt, and opened a commerce between that country and his own; by which means he ſoon acquired an immenſe number of horſes and chariots; and all his ſucceſſors, when they had it in their power, followed his example. But what did the kingdom gain by this change? They were before a rich and flouriſhing people; but after breaking this law of the moſt High, their wealth and power gradually declined, till at laſt their habitations were laid waſte, their temple and cities burnt with fire, and they themſelves carried captive into a ſtrange land.

It may perhaps be asked, wherein the guilt of having a country full of horſes conſiſted? There is certainly no moral crime in purchaſing and keeping theſe creatures; but the kings of Iſrael were exalted to the throne, on condition that they ſhould renounce the aſſiſtance of chariots and horſes, and depend upon God for ſucceſs in the day of battle.

Having thus conſidered this law, and the conſequences that reſulted from the breach of it, let us now look back to the prophecy relating to the Meſſiah, *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Sion; ſhout, O daughter of Jeruſalem: behold, thy king cometh unto thee: he is juſt, and having ſalvation, lowly, and riding upon an aſs, and upon a colt the foſe of an aſs. And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horſe from Jeruſalem*, Zech. ix. 9, &c.

Such is the king who was to ſave the deſcendents of Jacob: and what ſort of a king could be expected? Is it poſſible to imagine that God would ſend a king to ſave them who ſhould be like the kings which had undone them? Is it not more reaſonable to think, that he would reſemble thoſe who had been deliverers of their country? Kings who feared God, and therefore feared no enemy; who, though mounted on aſſes, and colts the foles of aſſes, were able to put to flight the thouſands and ten thouſands of chariots and horſe that came againſt them.

The king foretold by the prophet, was alſo to be juſt, meek, and lowly; but how could he have deſerved that character, had he appeared in the pride and pomp of war, ſurrounded with horſes and chariots, in direct oppoſition to the law of God? or, as he was to bring ſalvation to the people, could he make uſe of thoſe means, which God never had proſpered, and which he declared he never would?

It appears then that it was eſſential to the character of a king of Iſrael, who was to be juſt and lowly, and to bring ſalvation with him, that he ſhould come riding on an aſs, and a colt the foſe of an aſs; but if any doubt can yet remain, let the prophet himſelf explain it, who immediately after the deſcription of the promiſed king, adds, *and I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horſe from Jeruſalem:* plainly intimating, that the character given of the Meſſiah, that he ſhould ride on an aſs, was in oppoſition to the pride of their warlike kings, who, by their great ſtrength in chariots and horſes, had ruined themſelves and their people.

Thus have we undeniably ſhewn the intention of the prophet, when he foretold, that the Meſſiah ſhould ride on an aſs; and from hence it appears, that the enemies of revelation have not the leaſt reaſon for turning this tranſaction into ridicule. Was it any reproach to Chriſt to ride into Jeruſalem on the foſe of an aſs, when David the greateſt of his anceſtors, and Solomon the wiſeſt, as long as he was wiſe, rode in the ſame manner? Can the Jews object to this circumſtance, and yet talk of the glories of David, and the magnificence of Solomon, who in the midſt

midſt of all that glory and magnificence did the very ſame thing? Or can they ſtumble at this character of the Meſſiah, without forgetting by what princes their anceſtors were ſaved, and by what undone?

But to return from this digreſſion. The prodigious multitude that now accompanied Jeſus filled the Phariſees and great men with malice and envy, becauſe every method they had taken to hinder the people from following Jeſus, had proved ineffectual. *The Phariſees therefore ſaid among themſelves, perceive ye how we prevail nothing? behold the world is gone after him*, John xii. 19.

But when our bleſſed Saviour drew near the city of Jeruſalem, ſurrounded by the rejoicing multitude, notwithſtanding the many affronts he had there received, he beheld the city, and with a divine generoſity and benevolence, which nothing can equal, wept over it, and, in the moſt pathetic manner, lamented the calamities which he foreſaw were coming upon it, becauſe its inhabitants were ignorant of the time of their viſitation. *If*, ſaid he, *thou hadſt known, even thou, at leaſt in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days ſhall come upon thee, that thine enemies ſhall caſt a trench about thee, and compaſs thee round, and keep thee in on every ſide, and ſhall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee. And they ſhall not leave in thee one ſtone upon another: becauſe thou kneweſt not the time of thy viſitation*, Luke xix. 42, &c.

Behold here, ye wandering mortals, behold an example and generoſity infinitely ſuperior to any furniſhed by the heathen world; an example highly worthy for them to imitate and admire!

When Jeſus, ſurrounded by the multitude, entered Jeruſalem, the whole city was moved on account of the prodigious concourſe of people that accompanied him, and their continual acclamations. Jeſus rode immediately to the temple; but it being evening, he ſoon left the city, to the great diſcouragement of the people, who expected he was immediately to have taken into his hands the reins of government. *And Jeſus entered into Jeruſalem, and into the temple; and when he had looked round about upon all things, and now the eventide was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve*, Mark xi. 11.

CHAP. XXVIII.

Jeſus curſeth the fig-tree. Purges the temple. Anſwers the prieſts and elders concerning his authority. Delivers the parables of the two ſons commanded to work in the vineyard; the unjuſt husbandmen; and the marriage-ſupper.

NO ſooner had the early rays of the morning decorated the chambers of the eaſt, and called the feathered warblers of the fields from their dewy neſts, than our bleſſed Saviour left Bethany to viſit again the capital of Judea. And as he purſued his journey, he ſaw at a diſtance

tance a fig-tree, which, from its fulneſs of leaves, promiſed abundance of fruit. This inviting object induced him to approach it, in expectation of finding figs, for he was hungry, and the ſeaſon for gathering them was not yet arrived; but on his coming to the tree; he found it to be really barren. Upon which the bleſſed Jeſus ſaid to it, *Let no fruit grow on thee for ever*, Matt. xxi. 19.

This action, which was purely emblematical, and prefigured the ſpeedy ruin of the Jewiſh nation, on account of its unfruitfulneſs, under all the advantages it then enjoyed, has, by the enemies to revelation, been repreſented as an action unbecoming the Redeemer of mankind. But if they had fully conſidered its intention, they would have been convinced, that, like the reſt of his miracles, it was done with a gracious intention; namely, to awaken his countrymen from their lethargy, and by repentance, prevent the total ruin of their church and nation.

Being diſappointed in finding fruit on this fig-tree, our bleſſed Saviour purſued his journey to Jeruſalem; and on his arrival went ſtraightway to the temple, the outer court of which he found full of merchandize. A ſight like this vexed his meek and righteous ſoul; ſo that having made a ſmall ſcourge of cords he drove them all out of the temple, overturned the tables of the money-changers, and the ſeats of them that ſold doves, and would not ſuffer any veſſel to be carried through the temple, ſaying unto them, *Is it not written, my houſe ſhall be called of all nations, a houſe of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves*, Matt. xxi. 13.

St. Jerom conſiders this as one of the greateſt of all our Saviour's miracles. And it muſt be owned that the circumſtances are very extraordinary; that one man ſhould undertake ſo bold, and execute ſo hazardous a taſk—One man without a commiſſion from Cæſar; without any countenance from the Jewiſh rulers; without any arms either to terrify the multitude, or defend himſelf—That he ſhould caſt out the whole tribe of mercenary traffickers, wreſt from thoſe worſhippers of wealth their darling idol; and trample under foot their great Diana—And all this without tumult or oppoſition; not one of the ſacrilegious rabble daring to move the hand, or open the mouth. Whoever, I ſay, reflects on the fierce and ungovernable nature of an incenſed populace, or conſiders the outrageous zeal of Demetrius and the craftſmen on a leſs irritating occaſion, may poſſibly find himſelf almoſt, if not altogether, of the Latin father's opinion.

There is a tradition, that a certain bright and dazzling luſtre flaſhed from his eyes, which they were unable to bear, as the people could not behold the face of Moſes, for the glory that ſurrounded him. But as the ſcriptures take no notice of this tranſcendent luſtre, we muſt only adore the greatneſs of the fact, and, at the ſame time, ſo improve this miracle to our ſpiritual advantage as to ſecure, by acceping his grace, the power

power of this mighty reformer on our ſides, that when he ſhall come in glory, we may be ſafe under the ſhadow of his Almighty wings, while he takes fearful vengeance on thoſe who have defiled his holy temple, and made it a den of thieves; and thoſe who have robbed Omnipotence of his due, will then find their ſouls deprived of their everlaſting rewards in the happy manſions of a bleſſed eternity.

Our bleſſed Saviour having thus cleared the temple of this avaricious tribe of dealers, the people brought unto him the blind, the lame, and the diſeaſed, who were all healed by the Son of God; ſo that the very children, when they ſaw the many miraculous cures he performed, proclaimed him to be the great Son of David, the long expected Meſſiah.

Theſe tranſactions highly provoked the Phariſees; but they feared the people, and therefore only asked him, if he heard what the children ſaid? inſinuating that he ought to rebuke them, and not ſuffer them thus to load him with the higheſt praiſes. But Jeſus, inſtead of giving a direct anſwer to their queſtion, repeated a paſſage out of the eighth Pſalm. *Have ye never read*, ſaid the bleſſed Jeſus, *out of the mouths of babes and ſucklings thou haſt perfected praiſe?* Giving them to underſtand, that the meaneſt of God's works are ſo formed, as to declare the greatneſs of his protection; and that if the Father does not refuſe the praiſe which ariſes from the leaſt of his creatures, ſo the Son did not diſdain that offered him by children. In the preſent juncture, praiſe was peculiarly acceptable, as it implied, that his miracles were ſo exceedingly illuſtrious, that they led the tender minds of children, illuminated only with the dawnings of reaſon, to acknowledge him for the Meſſiah ſo long expected, and ſo earneſtly deſired by all the deſcendents of Jacob.

The evening being now come, Jeſus, with his diſciples, left the city, and retired to Bethany, where his benevolent miracle, in raiſing Lazarus from the dead, had procured him many friends, among whom he was always in ſafety. The next morning, as they were returning from Jeruſalem, the diſciples were aſtoniſhed at beholding the fig-tree that had been but the morning before declared barren, *dried up from the roots*: they had, in all probability, forgotten what our Saviour had ſaid to this fig-tree, till its dry and withered aſpect brought it again to their memory. Peter, on ſeeing this aſtoniſhing phenomenon, ſaid unto Jeſus, *Maſter, behold the fig-tree which thou curſedſt is withered away!* To which Jeſus anſwered, that whoever had faith in the Almighty, or thoroughly believed in his miracles, ſhould be able to do much greater things than the withering of the fig-tree. *And Jeſus anſwering, ſaith unto them, Have faith in God. For verily I ſay unto you, that whoſoever ſhall ſay unto this mountain, be thou removed, and be thou caſt into the ſea, and ſhall not doubt in his heart, but ſhall believe, that*

that theſe things which he ſaith ſhall come to paſs, he ſhall have whatſoever he ſaith, Mark xi. 22, 23.

Our bleſſed Saviour added, that whatſoever they ſhould ask by faith, they ſhould receive; and concluded by giving them directions concerning prayer, which was neceſſary to increaſe the faith he mentioned. *And when ye ſtand praying, forgive, if ye have ought againſt any, that your Father alſo which is in heaven may forgive you your treſpaſſes. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven, forgive your treſpaſſes*, Mark xx. 25, 26.

While our bleſſed Saviour continued in the temple, certain proſelyted Greeks who came up to worſhip at Jeruſalem, deſired to ſee him, having long cheriſhed expectations of beholding the promiſed Meſſiah. Accordingly they applied to Philip, a native of Bethſaida, who mentioned it to Andrew, and he told it to Jeſus. Upon which our bleſſed Saviour told his diſciples, that he ſhould ſoon be honoured with the converſion of the Gentiles: *The hour is come*, ſaid he, *that the ſon of man ſhould be glorified*, But declared, that before this glorious event happened, he muſt ſuffer death; illuſtrating the neceſſity there was of his dying, by the ſimilitude of caſting grain into the earth. *Verily, verily, I ſay unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground, and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit*, John xii. 24. Adding, that ſince it was abſolutely neceſſary for him, their Lord and Maſter, to ſuffer the pains of death before he aſcended the throne of his glory; ſo they, as his followers, muſt alſo expect to be perſecuted and ſpitefully uſed for his nameſake; but if they perſevered, and even reſolved to loſe their lives in his ſervice, he would reward their conſtancy with a crown of glory. And at the ſame time he tacitly inſinuated, that the ſtrangers, if their deſire of converſing with him proceeded from a deſire of obtaining from him temporal preferments, they would find themſelves ſadly diſappointed. *If any man ſerve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there ſhall alſo my ſervant be. If any man ſerve me, him will my Father honour*, John xii. 26.

Having thus ſurveyed his own ſufferings, and propoſed them as an example to his diſciples, the melancholy proſpect ſo greatly moved him, that he uttered, in a very pathetic manner his grief, and addreſſed his heavenly Father for ſuccour in his diſtreſs. *Now is my ſoul troubled, and what ſhall I ſay? Father ſave me from this hour. But for this cauſe came I into the world*, John xii. 27.

From this example of the bleſſed Jeſus we ſhould learn, that prayer is the only method of eaſing the mind overwhelmed with diſtreſs. But at the ſame time to be always reſigned to the divine will; for though the weakneſs of human nature may ſhrink when perſecutions or ſufferings of any kind appear in all their hideous forms, yet, by reflecting on the wiſdom, goodneſs, and power of God to deliver us, we ought

to ſupport every trial, however ſevere, with patience, as he doubtleſs propoſes ſome happy end by theſe afflictions.

The bleſſed Jeſus having given vent to his melancholly reflections, and made a ſhort prayer to his heavenly Father, begged of God to demonſtrate the truth of his miſſion, by ſome token which could not be reſiſted. *Father, glorify thy name.* Nor had the great Redeemer of mankind hardly uttered theſe words, before he was anſwered by an audible voice from heaven, *I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.* The miracles thou haſt already performed have glorified my name; and I will ſtill continue to glorify it, by other miracles to be wrought before the ſons of men.

This voice was evidently preternatural, reſembling thunder in loudneſs, but ſufficiently articulate to be underſtood by thoſe who heard our bleſſed Saviour pray to his heavenly Father. And Jeſus told his diſciples that it was not given for his ſake, but to confirm them in their faith of his miſſion. *This voice,* ſaid he, *came not becauſe of me, but for your ſakes.* It came to confirm what I have told you relating to my ſufferings, death, reſurrection, and the converſion of the whole Gentile world to the Chriſtian religion.

A proſpect like this could not fail of being agreeable to that compaſſionate Being, who came down from heaven to redeem loſt and undone mankind, and of removing the melancholy thoughts that afflicted his ſpotleſs ſoul. And accordingly he communicated this comfortable reflection to his diſciples; telling them that the time was at hand, when the kingdom of ſatan ſhould be deſtroyed, and the ſons of men exalted with himſelf into the happy regions of the heavenly Canaan. *Now is the judgment of this world: Now ſhall the prince of this world be caſt out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me,* John xii. 31, *&c.*

The people, on hearing our bleſſed Redeemer affirm that he was to ſuffer death on the croſs, or, as he termed it, *be lifted up from the earth,* could not reconcile what he ſaid with the prophecies made concerning the Meſſiah, whom they ſuppoſed was never to taſte of death. *We have heard,* ſaid they, *out of the law, that Chriſt abideth for ever: and how ſayeſt thou the ſon of man muſt be lifted up?* John xii. 34. To which the bleſſed Jeſus replied, that they ſhould ſoon be deprived of his preſence and miracles; and therefore they would do well to liſten attentively to his precepts, firmly believe the doctrines he delivered, and wiſely improve them to their eternal advantage; for otherwiſe they would be ſoon overtaken with ſpiritual blindneſs, and rendered incapable of inheriting the promiſes of the goſpel. That while they enjoyed the benefit of his preaching and miracles, which ſufficiently proved the truth of his miſſion from the moſt High, they ſhould believe on him; for by that means alone they could become the children of God. *Yet a little while is the light*

with you; walk while you have the light, leſt darkneſs come upon you: for he that walketh in darkneſs, knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have the light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light, John xii. 35, *&c.*

Our bleſſed Saviour having ſpoken theſe words to the people, he retired privately from Jeruſalem, probably to Bethany. But, notwithſtanding the many miracles our great Redeemer had wrote in preſence of this perverſe and ſtiff-necked people, the generality of them refuſed to own him for the Meſſiah; being filled with the vain expectations of a temporal prince, who was to rule over all the kingdoms of the earth, and place his throne in Jeruſalem. Some, indeed, even of the rulers, believed on him, tho' they thought it prudent to conceal their faith, leſt they ſhould, like the blind man, be excommunicated, or put out of the ſynagogue; valuing the good opinion of men above the approbation of the Almighty.

But as the Saviour of the world was willing to cheriſh the leaſt glimmerings of faith, wherever it appeared, he ſoon returned to Jeruſalem; and to inſpire ſuch as believed on him with courage, he cried in the temple, *He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that ſent me.* As if he had ſaid, the doctrine I preach to the children of men is ſo evidently from God, that he who believeth on me believeth more properly on the Almighty, who ſent me into the world, and by whoſe authority alone I preach the goſpel. Adding, he that ſeeth the miracles I perform, ſeeth the operations of that omnipotent Power by which I act. I am the Sun of righteouſneſs, whoſe beams diſpel the darkneſs of ignorance in which the ſons of men are involved, and am come to deliver all who believe on me out of that palpable darkneſs. You muſt not however expect, that I will at preſent execute my judgments upon thoſe who refuſe to embrace the doctrines of the goſpel; for I am not come to condemn and puniſh, but to ſave the world, and conſequently to try every gentle and winning method to reclaim the wicked from the error of their ways, and turn their feet into the paths of virtue, which lead to the happy manſions of my Father's kingdom. They ſhall not, however, eſcape unpuniſhed who neglect the inſtructions and offers of ſalvation now made to them; for the doctrine I have preached ſhall bear witneſs againſt them, at the aweful tribunal of the laſt day; and as it has aggravated their ſin, ſo it ſhall then heighten their puniſhment. I well know, that the doctrines and precepts which the Father hath commanded me to preach are the only conditions of eternal life; and therefore I have propoſed them with the greateſt faithfulneſs, perſpicuity, and confidence; conſequently I am worthy of credit, both with regard to my miſſion, and the faithfulneſs with which I have executed the commands of the moſt High.

While Jeſus was thus preaching in the temple, a deputation of prieſts

and elders was ſent from the ſupreme council, to aſk him concerning the nature of the authority by which he acted, whether it was as prophet, prieſt, or king, as no other perſon had a right to make any alterations either in church or ſtate? and if he laid claim to either of thoſe characters, from whom he received it? But our bleſſed Saviour, inſtead of giving a direct anſwer to the queſtions of the Phariſees, asked them another; promiſing, if they reſolved his queſtion, he would alſo anſwer theirs. *I alſo will aſk you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like manner will tell you by what authority I do theſe things. The baptiſm of John, whence was it? from heaven or of men?* Matt. xxi. 24, *&c.*

This queſtion reduced the prieſts to an inextricable dilemma. They conſidered, on the one hand, that if they be from God, it would oblige them to acknowledge the authority of Jeſus; John having more than once publickly declared him to be the Meſſiah: and on the other, if they peremptorily denied the authority of John, they would be in danger of being ſtoned by the people, who, in general, conſidered him as a prophet. They therefore thought it the moſt eligible method to anſwer, that they could not tell from whence John's baptiſm was. Thus, by declining to anſwer the queſtion aſked them by Jeſus, they left him at liberty to decline giving the council the ſatisfaction they had ſent to demand. And at the ſame time they plainly confeſſed, that they were unable to paſs any ſentence on John the Baptiſt, notwithſtanding he claimed the character of a meſſenger from God, and they had ſent to examine his pretenſions. This was, in effect, to acknowledge that they were incapable of judging of any prophet whatſoever. Well, therefore, might the bleſſed Jeſus ſay, *Neither tell I you by what authority I do theſe things.* You have no right to aſk, ſince you have confeſſed you are unable to judge; and therefore I ſhall not ſatisfy your impertinent enquiry.

But becauſe this deputation had ſaid, that they were ignorant from whence the baptiſm of John was, our bleſſed Saviour ſharply rebuked them, conveying his reproof in the parable of the two ſons commanded to work in their father's vineyard; and aſking their opinion of the two, made them condemn themſelves.

A certain man, ſaid he, *had two ſons: and he came to the firſt and ſaid, ſon go work to-day in my vineyard.* But this ungracious youth very roughly anſwered the kind command of his father, and without the leaſt preface, or appellation of reſpect, anſwered, *I will not.* But, after reflecting on the impropriety and indecency of ſuch behaviour to his kind and indulgent father, he repented of what he had done, and went to work in the vineyard. The father having met with ſo harſh a reply from the former ſon, had recourſe to the other, and in the ſame manner ordered him to work that day in his vineyard. This ſon was very different from the former, and in a very dutiful manner ſaid, *I go, ſir.* But notwithſtanding this ſeeming obedience, he

he delayed to do as his father deſired; he did not go to work in the vineyard. The temper and behaviour of this ſecond ſon were exactly conformable to that of the Phariſees. They gave the Almighty the moſt honourable titles, and profeſſed the utmoſt zeal for his ſervice, in their prayers and praiſes; but at the ſame time refuſed to do any part of the work that he enjoined them. In the character of the other ſon, the diſpoſition of the publicans and harlots is well deſcribed. They neither profeſſed or promiſed to do the will of their Creator; but when they came to reflect ſeriouſly on their conduct, and the offers of mercy which were ſo kindly made them, they ſubmitted to our Saviour, and in conſequence of their faith, amended their lives.

Jeſus having thus finiſhed the parables, asked the Phariſees, *Whether of them twain did the will of his Father? they ſay unto him, the firſt.* They did not immediately perceive, that by this anſwer they condemned themſelves, till our Saviour made a juſt application of the parable, in this ſharp, but juſt rebuke. *Verily, I ſay unto you, that the Publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteouſneſs, and ye believed him not,* nor entered into your father's vineyard, though, like the ſecond ſon, you promiſe in the moſt fair and candid manner; *but the publicans and the harlots believed him,* repented of their former diſobedience, and entered into the vineyard.

Our Saviour did not reſt ſatisfied with ſhewing the Phariſees the heinouſneſs of their ſin in rejecting the Baptiſt, but he thought proper alſo to repreſent the crime of the nation in rejecting all the prophets which had been ſent ſince they became a nation, and among the reſt, the only begotten Son of the moſt High; warning them at the ſame time of their danger, and the puniſhment that would inivetably enſue, if they continued in their rebellion. The outward œconomy of religion, in which they gloried, would be taken from them, their relation to God as his people cancelled, and the national conſtitution deſtroyed; but becauſe theſe topics were extremely diſagreeable, he delivered them under the veil of the following parable: *There was,* ſaid he, *a certain houſholder, which planted a vineyard and hedged it round about, and digged a wine preſs in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country.*

The compariſon of the church to a vineyard is frequent in the ſacred ſcripture, but this particular parable, for the fuller conviction of the Jews, is expreſſly taken from the fifth Chapter of the prophet Iſaiah, with which they could not fail of being well acquainted, nor ignorant of its meaning, as the prophet at the end of it adds, *The vineyard of the Lord of hoſts is the houſe of Iſrael, and the men of Judah his pleaſant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppreſſion; for righteouſneſs, but behold a cry.* Our Saviour, therefore, continued the metaphor, telling them, *that when the time of the fruit drew*

drew near, he ſent his ſervants that they might receive the fruits of it. And the husbandmen took his ſervants, and beat one, and killed another, and ſtoned another. The Almighty ſent the prophets to exhort the Jews to entertain juſt ſentiments of religion, and tread the paths of virtue; but the Jews, extremely irritated at the prophets for the freedom they uſed in reproving their ſins, perſecuted and ſlew them with unrelenting fury. Their wickedneſs, however, in killing theſe meſſengers, did not inſtantly provoke the Almighty to pour down his vengeance upon them: he ſent more prophets to exhort and reclaim them, but they met with no better fate than the former. His mercy however ſtill continued, and that no means might be left untried, he ſent unto them his own ſon, whoſe authority being clearly eſtabliſhed by undeniable miracles, ought to have been acknowledged chearfully by theſe wicked men: but how different was the conſequence? *When theſe husbandmen ſaw the ſon, they ſaid among themſelves, This is the heir, come let us kill him, and let us ſeize on his inheritance. When the Lord, therefore, of the vineyard cometh, what will he do to theſe husbandmen? They ſay unto him, he will miſerably deſtroy thoſe wicked men, and let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which ſhall render him the fruits in their ſeaſons,* Matt. xxi. 38, &c.

The people, on hearing this anſwer made by the Phariſees, ſaid, *God forbid*; ſurely theſe huſbandmen will not proceed to ſuch deſperate iniquity; ſurely the vineyard will not thus be taken from them. But, to confirm the truth of this, our Saviour added a remarkable prophecy of himſelf, and his rejection, from the 118th Pſalm: *Did ye never*, ſaid he, *read in the ſcriptures, the ſtone which the builders rejected, the ſame is become the head of the corner; this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?*

The rejection of the Meſſiah by the Jews, and the reception he met with among the Gentiles, all brought to paſs by the providence of God, are wonderful events; and therefore I ſay unto you, the kingdom of God ſhall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

The chief prieſts, perceiving the drift of our Saviour's parable, were highly incenſed, and would gladly have appehended him; but they feared the people who ſurrounded him in the temple, and acknowledged him as the Meſſiah.

The rulers being afraid to apprehend Jeſus, he was at liberty to proceed in the offices of his miniſtry: accordingly he delivered another parable, wherein he deſcribed on the one hand, the bad ſucceſs which the preaching of the goſpel was to meet with among the Jews; and on the other, the cheerful reception given it among the Gentiles. This gracious deſign of the Almighty, in giving the goſpel to the children of men, our bleſſed Saviour illuſtrated by the behaviour of a certain king, who, in honour of his ſon, made a great feaſt, to which he invited many

many gueſts. *The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his ſon.* This marriage-ſupper, or great feaſt, ſignifies the joys of heaven, which are properly compared to an elegant entertainment, on account of their exquiſiteneſs and duration; and are here ſaid to be prepared in honour of the Son of God, becauſe they are beſtowed on men as the reward of their obedience.

Before the ſupper was ready, the ſervants were ſent forth to call the gueſts to the wedding; that is, when the fulneſs of time approached, the Jews, as being the peculiar people of God, were firſt called to the great feaſt of heaven by John the Baptiſt, and afterwards by Chriſt himſelf; but they refuſed all theſe benevolent calls of mercy, rejected the kind invitations of the goſpel, tho' preſſed by the preaching of the Meſſiah, and his fore-runner. After our Saviour's reſurrection and aſcenſion, the apoſtles were ſent forth to inform the Jews, that the goſpel-covenant was eſtabliſhed, manſions in heaven prepared, and nothing wanting but their chearful acceptance of the honour deſigned them. *Again, he ſent forth other ſervants, ſaying, tell them which are bidden, behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready; come unto the marriage.* But theſe meſſengers were as unſucceſsful as the former. The Jews undervaluing the favour offered them, mocked at the meſſage; and ſome of them, more rude than the reſt, inſulted, beat, and ſlew the ſervants that had been ſent to call them to the marriage-ſupper of the lamb. *But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth; and ſent forth his armies, and deſtroyed thoſe murderers, and burnt up their city.* This branch of the parable plainly predicted the deſtruction of the Jews by the Roman armies, called here the armies of the Almighty, becauſe they were appointed by him to execute vengeance on that once favourite, but now rebellious people.

The Jews having thus rejected the benevolent calls of the goſpel, the king again ſent forth his ſervants into the countries of the Gentiles, with orders to compel all that they met with to come in to the marriage. This was immediately done, and the wedding was furniſhed with gueſts; but when the king came into the apartment, *he ſaw there a man, which had not on a wedding garment; and he ſaith unto him, friend, how cameſt thou in hither, not having a wedding garment? and he was ſpeechleſs. Then ſaid the king to his ſervants, bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and caſt him into outer darkneſs, there ſhall be weeping and gnaſhing of teeth; for many are called, but few are choſen,* Matt. xxii. 11, *&c.*

The latter part of the parable repreſents the final judgment, and teaches us, that though the Gentiles obeyed the call of the goſpel with more alacrity than the Jews, yet they ſhould not all be ſaved. And by the concluſion of the parable we learn, that the profeſſion of the chriſtian religion will not ſave a man, unleſs

unleſs he lives in a manner conformable to its precepts. Let us, therefore, who have obeyed the call, and are by profeſſion the people of God, think often on that awful day, when the king will come in to ſee his gueſts, when the Almighty will, with the greateſt ſtrictneſs, view every ſoul that lays claim to the joys of heaven; let us think of the ſpeechleſs confuſion that will ſeize ſuch as have not on the wedding-garment, and of the inexorable anxiety with which they will be conſigned to weeping and gnaſhing of teeth: and let us remember, that to have ſeen for a while the light of the goſpel, and the fair beamings of an eternal hope, will add deeper and more ſenſible horrors to theſe gloomy caverns. On the other hand to animate and encourage us, let us think alſo on the happy time when the marriage-ſupper of the lamb ſhall be celebrated, and all the harmony, pomp, and beauty of heaven ſhall add to its ſolemnity, its magnificence, its joys.

CHAP. XXIX.

Our Saviour determines the lawfulneſs of paying tribute. Confutes the Sadducees. Determines the great commandment of the law. Propoſes a queſtion concerning the Meſſiah, and pronounces woes againſt the Phariſees a ſecond time.

THE Phariſees were ſo highly incenſed at the parable of the marriage-ſupper, that they immediately concerted with the Herodians or Sadducees on the moſt proper method of putting him to death. It is ſufficiently evident that their hatred was now carried to the higheſt pitch, becauſe the moſt violent enmity which had ſo long ſubſiſted between the two ſects, was on this occaſion ſuſpended, and they joined together to execute this cruel determination on the Son of God. They, however, thought it moſt eligible to act very cautiouſly, and endeavour, if poſſible, to catch ſome haſty expreſſion from him, that they might render him odious to the people, and procure ſomething againſt him, that might ſerve as a baſis for a proſecution. Accordingly they ſent ſome of their diſciples to him, with orders to feign themſelves juſt men, who maintained the greateſt veneration for the divine law, and dreaded nothing more than the doing any thing inconſiſtent with its precepts; and under this ſpecious cloak of hypocriſy, to beg his determination of an affair that had long lain heavy on their conſciences; namely, the paying tribute to Cæſar, which they thought inconſiſtent with their zeal for religion. This queſtion was, it ſeems, furiouſly debated in our Saviour's time; one Judas, a native of Galilee, having inſpired the people with a notion that taxes to a foreign power were abſolutely unlawful. A doctrine ſo pleaſing to the worldly-minded Jews, could not fail of friends, eſpecially among the lower claſs; and therefore muſt have many partizans among the multitude that then ſurrounded the Son of God.

The prieſts therefore imagined, that it was not in his power to decide the point, without rendering himſelf obnoxious to ſome of the parties: if he ſhould ſay it was lawful to pay the taxes, they believed that the people in whoſe hearing the queſtion was propoſed would be incenſed againſt him, not only as a baſe pretender, who, on being attacked, publicly renounced the character of the Meſſiah, which he had aſſumed among his friends, but alſo as a flatterer of princes, and a betrayer of the liberties of his country, one who taught doctrines inconſiſtent with the known privileges of the people of God: but if he ſhould affirm that it was unlawful to pay tribute, they determined to inform the governor, who they hoped would puniſh him as a fomenter of ſedition. Highly elated with their project, they accordingly came; and after paſſing an encomium on the truth of his miſſion, his courage, and impartiality, they propoſed this famous queſtion: *Maſter, ſaid they, we know that thou art true, and careſt for no man; for thou regardeſt not the perſon of men, but teacheſt the word of God in truth,* Mark xii. 14. *Tell us therefore, what thinkeſt thou, is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæſar or not?* Matt. xxii. 17.

But however artfully they had laid the ſcheme, they could not deceive the bleſſed Jeſus, who beheld the inmoſt receſſes of their hearts. He ſaw their ſecret intentions; and accordingly called them hypocrites, to ſignify, that though they made conſcience, and a regard for the divine will, their pretence for propoſing this queſtion, he ſaw through the thin veil that concealed their deſign from the eyes of mortals, and knew that their intention was to enſnare him.

He, however, did not decline anſwering their queſtion, but previouſly deſired to ſee a piece of the tribute money. The piece was accordingly produced, and proved to be coined by the Romans. Upon which our bleſſed Saviour anſwered them, ſince this money bears the image of Cæſar it is his; and by making uſe of it, you acknowledge his authority. If ſo, I leave it to yourſelves, to judge whether tribute ought not to be paid toward the ſupport of that government which ye have acknowledged, which ye cannot ſhake off, and by which your tranquility is preſerved. But at the ſame time that you diſcharge your duty to the civil magiſtrate, you ſhould never forget the duty you owe to your God; but remember, that as you bear the image of the great, the omnipotent King, you are his ſubjects, and ought to pay him the tribute of yourſelves, ſerving him to the very utmoſt of your power.

The Phariſees and their followers, under a pretence of religion, often juſtified ſedition; but the Herodians, in order to ingratiate themſelves with the reigning powers, made them a compliment of their conſciences, complying with whatever they enjoined, however oppoſite their commands might be to the divine law. Our Lord, therefore, adapted his anſwer to them both, exhorting them

them in their regards to God and the magiſtrate, to give each his due; there being no inconſiſtency between their rights, when their rights only are inſiſted on.

So unexpected an anſwer, in which Jeſus confuted them on their own principles, and ſhewed that the rights of God and thoſe of the magiſtrate do not in the leaſt interfere, becauſe magiſtrates are God's deputies, and rule by his authority, quite diſconcerted, and ſilenced theſe crafty enemies. They were aſtoniſhed both at his having diſcovered their deſign, and his wiſdom in avoiding the ſnare they had ſo artfully laid for him. *When they heard theſe words, they marvelled, and left him, and went their way*, Matt. xxii. 22.

But the defeat of this coalition did not intimidate others from renewing the attack; enemies came againſt him from every quarter. The Sadducees, who denied the doctrine of a future ſtate, together with the exiſtence of angels and ſpirits, firſt returned to the charge; propoſing to him their ſtrongeſt argument againſt the reſurrection, which they deduced from the law given by Moſes with regard to marriage. *Maſter*, ſaid they, *Moſes wrote unto us, If a man's brother die, having a wife, and he die without children, that his brother ſhould take his wife, and raiſe up ſeed unto his brother. There were, therefore, ſeven brethren; and the firſt took a wife, and died without children. And the ſecond took her to wife, and he died childleſs. And the third took her; and in like manner the ſeven alſo. And they left no children and died. Laſt of all the woman died alſo. Therefore, in the reſurrection, whoſe wife of them is ſhe? for ſeven had her to wife*, Luke xx. 28, *&c.*

The Sadducees, who believed the ſoul to be nothing more than a refined matter, were perſuaded, that if there was any future ſtate, it muſt reſemble the preſent; and that being in that ſtate material and mortal, the human race could not be continued, nor the individuals rendered happy without the pleaſures and conveniencies of marriage. And hence conſidered it as a neceſſary conſequence of the doctrine of the reſurrection, or a future ſtate, that every man's wife ſhould be reſtored to him.

But this argument our bleſſed Saviour ſoon confuted, by telling the Phariſees they were ignorant of the power of God, who had created ſpirit as well as matter, and who can render man completely happy in the enjoyment of himſelf. He alſo obſerved, that the nature of the life obtained in a future ſtate, made marriage altogether ſuperfluous, becauſe in the world to come, men being ſpiritual and immortal, like the angels, there was no need of natural means to propagate or continue the kind. *Ye do err*, ſaid the bleſſed Jeſus, *not knowing the ſcriptures nor the power of God. For in the reſurrection, they neither marry nor are given in marriage*, Matt. xxii. 29. *Neither can they die any more; for they are equal unto the angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the reſurrection*, Luke xx. 36. Hence we may obſerve, that good men are

called the children of the moſt High, from their inheritance at the reſurrection, and particularly on account of their being adorned with immortality.

Our bleſſed Saviour having thus ſhewn their ignorance of the true nature of a future ſtate, and the difference between corporal and ſpiritual beings, proceeded to ſhew that they were alſo ignorant of the ſcriptures, and particularly of the writings of Moſes, from whence they had drawn their objection. For he demonſtrated from the very law itſelf the certainty of a reſurrection, at leaſt that of juſt men, and conſequently quite demoliſhed the opinion of the Sadducees, who, by believing the materiality of the ſoul, affirmed that men were annihilated at their death, and that their opinion was founded on the writings of Moſes. *Now*, ſaid our Saviour, *that the dead are raiſed, even Moſes ſhewed at the buſh, when he calleth the Lord, the God of Abraham, and the God of Iſaac, and the God of Jacob. For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him*, Luke xx. 37, 38. As if he had ſaid, The Almighty cannot properly be called God, unleſs he has his people, and be Lord of the living. Since, therefore, Moſes called him the God of Abraham, the God of Iſaac, and the God of Jacob, long after theſe venerable patriarchs were dead, the relation denoted by the word *God* ſtill ſubſiſted between them; conſequently they were not annihilated as you pretend, but ſtill in being, and continue to be the ſervants of the moſt High. This argument was concluſive; it effectually ſilenced the Sadducees, and agreeably ſurpriſed the people, to ſee the objection hitherto thought impregnable totally aboliſhed, and the ſect they had long abominated fully confuted. *And when the multitude heard this, they were aſtoniſhed at his doctrine*, Matt. xxii. 33.

The Phariſees, though they had joined with the Sadducees in order to put our bleſſed Saviour to death, could not fail of being pleaſed to ſee their inveterate enemies put to ſilence, and the famous argument they had ſo often propoſed with oſtentation as unanſwerable, fully confuted. Nor could they refrain from giving the Saviour of mankind the praiſe due to his ſuperlative wiſdom; for one of the ſcribes deſired him to give his opinion, on a queſtion often debated among their teachers; namely, which was the great commandment of the law. The true reaſon for their propoſing this queſtion was to try whether he was as well acquainted with the ſacred law, and the debates that had ariſen on different parts of it, as he was in deriving arguments from the inſpired writers, to deſtroy the tenets of thoſe who denied a future ſtate.

It muſt be remembered, in order to underſtand the queſtion propoſed to our bleſſed Saviour by the ſcribe, that ſome of the moſt learned Rabbins had declared that the law of ſacrifices was the great commandment; ſome that it was the law of circumciſion; and others, that the law of meats and waſhings beſt merited

rited that title. Our bleſſed Saviour, however, ſhewed that they were all miſtaken; and that the great commandment of the law is the duty of piety; and particularly mentioned, that comprehenſive ſummary of it, given by Moſes: *Hear, O Iſrael, the Lord thy God is one Lord: and thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy ſoul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy ſtrength*, Mark xii. 29, 30. *This is the firſt and great commandment*, Mark xii. 30.

I cannot help obſerving here, that this ſummary of piety begins with an emphatical aſſertion of there being only one God, the maker of heaven and earth, and the poſſeſſor of all perfection, in order to induce us to uſe the utmoſt diligence in obeying his precepts; the firſt and chief of which is, to give him our hearts. The divine Being is ſo tranſcendently amiable in himſelf, and hath, by the innumerable benefits conferred upon us, ſuch a title to our utmoſt affection, that no obligation bears any proportion to that of loving him. The honour aſſigned to this precept proves that piety is the nobleſt act of the human mind; and that the chief ingredient in piety is love, founded on a clear and extenſive view of the divine perfections, a permanent ſenſe of his benefits, and a deep conviction of his being the ſovereign good, our portion, our happineſs. But it is eſſential to love that there be a delight in contemplating the beauty of the object beloved, whether that beauty be matter of ſenſation or reflection; that we frequently, and with pleaſure, reflect on the benefits conferred on us by the object of our affections; that we have a ſtrong deſire of pleaſing him, great fear of doing any thing to offend him, and a ſenſible joy in thinking we are beloved in return. Hence the duties of devotion, prayer, and praiſe, are the moſt natural and genuine exerciſes of the love of God. Nor is this virtue ſo much any ſingle affection as the continual bent of all the affections and powers of the ſoul: conſequently to love God is as much as poſſible to direct the whole ſoul towards him, and to exerciſe all its faculties on him as its chief object. Accordingly the love of God is deſcribed in ſcripture by the ſeveral operations of the mind, *a following hard after God*, namely, by intenſe contemplation; a ſenſe of his perfections, gratitude for his benefits, truſt in his goodneſs, attachment to his ſervice, reſignation to his providence, the obeying of his commandments, admiration, hope, fear, joy, *&c.* not becauſe it conſiſts in any of thoſe ſingly, but in them altogether; for to content ourſelves with partial regards to the ſupreme Being, is not to be affected towards him in the manner we ought to be, and which his perfections claim. Hence the words of the precept are, *Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy ſoul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy ſtrength*; that is, with the joint force of all thy faculties; and therefore no idol whatſoever muſt partake of the love and worſhip that is due to him. But the beauty and excellency of this ſtate of mind is

beſt ſeen in its effects; for the worſhip and obedience flowing from ſuch an univerſal bent of the ſoul towards God is as much ſuperior to the worſhip and obedience ariſing from partial conſiderations, as the brightneſs of the ſun is to any picture that can be drawn of that luminary. Thus, for example, if we look upon God only as a ſtern lawgiver, who can and will puniſh our rebellion, it may, indeed, force an awe and dread of him, and as much obedience to his laws as we think will ſatisfy him, but can never produce that conſtancy in our duty, that delight in it, and that earneſtneſs to perform it in its utmoſt extent which are produced and maintained in the mind, by the ſacred fire of divine love, or by the bent of the whole ſoul turned towards God; a frame the moſt excellent that can be conceived, and the moſt to be deſired, becauſe it conſtitutes the higheſt perfection and happineſs of the creature.

We ſhould earneſtly deſire to be near the moſt High, and be bleſſed with his preſence; our ſouls ſhould pant after him as the hart panteth after the water-brooks, and even thirſt for the living God. Again, this commandment requires us to fear God; and certainly we cannot love the Lord our God, unleſs we fear and reverence him: for as the love, ſo the fear of God, is the ſum of all the commandments, and indeed the ſubſtance of all religion. If we acknowledge there is a God, it is but reaſonable we ſhould fear his eſſential greatneſs and glory; for take away the fear of a deity, and that of a ſupreme power that can reward and puniſh the actions of men, and you open a paſſage for a deluge of villainy and wickedneſs.

But it is not enough that we love and fear the moſt High, we muſt alſo invoke the name of God in our prayers and praiſes. Love and fear reſpect the inward worſhip of God in our hearts; but by this apparatus to his outward worſhip, we give an expreſs teſtimony that we love and fear him. Prayer and praiſes are the tribute and homage of religion; by the one we acknowledge our dependance upon God; by the other we confeſs that all our bleſſings and comforts are from him. Such, therefore, as neither pray to God nor praiſe him, cannot be ſaid to have a God; for they acknowledge none, but are gods to themſelves: and as the love and fear of God are often uſed in ſcripture for his whole worſhip and ſervice, ſo is this invocation of his name: *Pour out thy fury upon the heathen, and upon the families that have not called upon thy name*; that is, thoſe who do not worſhip or ſerve him.

But to return.—Our bleſſed Saviour having thus anſwered the queſtion put to him by the ſcribe, added, that the ſecond commandment was that which enjoined the love of our neighbour. This had, indeed, no relation to the lawyer's queſtion concerning the firſt commandment; yet our bleſſed Lord thought proper to ſhew him which was the ſecond, probably becauſe the men of his ſect did not acknowledge the importance

tance and precedency of love to their neighbours, or becauſe they were remarkably deficient in the practice of it, as Jeſus himſelf had often found in their attempts to kill him. *And the ſecond is like unto it, Thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thyſelf.*

If our natures are brought to a temper that is all love and goodneſs, then we become like God, who is love; and if our ſouls dwell in love, then we dwell in God, and God in us. This principle will be alſo fruitful of every good work. It will make us readily perform the duties of all relations in which we ſtand. And becauſe love worketh no ill to his neighbour, therefore it is the fulfilling of the law; for it will prompt us to a chearful and ready performance of every office, whether of juſtice or charity, that we owe to our neighbour. All the beſt things we can do, if deſtitute of this principle, will appear to be either the effect of hypocriſy, or done to procure the eſteem of men. Without love, a narrowneſs of ſoul will ſhut us up within ourſelves, and make all we do to others only as a ſort of merchandize, trading for our own advantage. It is love only that opens our hearts to conſider other perſons, and to love them on their own account, or rather on account of God, who is love.

A happy effect of this excellent temper on thoſe who poſſeſs it well deſerves our conſideration. They have a conſtant calm within, and are not diſturbed with paſſion, jealouſy, envy, or ill-nature. They obſerve and rejoice in the happineſs of others; they are glad to ſee them eaſy and ſhare with them in their joy and felicity; not fretting or complaining, though they enjoy leſs than their neighbours. It is true, love has a very different effect; for the ſame temper will render many ſo conſiderate of the misfortunes of others, as to ſympathize with them in their diſtreſs, and be greatly affected with ſuch objects of compaſſion as it is not in their power to aſſiſt. But there is a real pleaſure even in this compaſſion, as it melts us to the greateſt tenderneſs, and proves us to be men and chriſtians. The good man, by the overflowings of his love, is ſure that he is a favourite with his maker, becauſe he loves his neighbour. His ſoul therefore dwells at eaſe; there is a ſweetneſs in all his thoughts and wiſhes. This makes him clear in his views of things. No vapours, no clouds darken him, but an inward ſerenity reigns in his mind, and ſuch a livelineſs in all his thoughts as ſpreads a chearfulneſs in his looks, and renders him grateful to all about him.

The charitable temper alſo maintains in him a conſtant diſpoſition for prayer. A calm mind is eaſily recollected, but nothing diſſipates the thoughts more, and renders them leſs fixed and attentive than paſſion. A charitable man, who has had occaſions to forbear and forgive others, and to return good for evil, dares, with an humble aſſurance, to lay claim to mercy and pardon; for though he is ready to acknowledge, he is many talents indebted to his maker, yet being of a forgiving temper, he has

has an argument to plead for mercy and forgiveneſs, and to conclude that *much will be forgiven him, becauſe he loveth much.* There is ſuch a likeneſs and ſympathy between the ſpirit of love, and the ſpirit of true devotion, that they have a ſenſible influence upon each other, and the one will riſe or fall in proportion to the other.

I ſhall now return from this digreſſion, which I flatter myſelf has not been diſagreeable to the reader, to the ſcribe who was aſtoniſhed at the juſtneſs of our Saviour's deciſions, and anſwered, that he had determined rightly, ſince there is but one ſupreme God, whom we muſt all adore; and if we love him as much as we are able, and without a rival, and our neighbour as ourſelves, we worſhip him more acceptably than if we ſacrifice to him *all the cattle upon a thouſand hills.*

Our bleſſed Saviour highly applauded the piety and wiſdom of this reflection, by declaring that the perſon who made it was not far from the kingdom of God.

As the Phariſees, during the courſe of our Saviour's miniſtry, had propoſed to him many difficult queſtions with an intention to prove his prophetical gifts, he now, in his turn, thought proper to make a trial of their ſkill in the ſacred writings. For this purpoſe, he aſked their opinion of a difficulty concerning the Meſſiah's pedigree. *What think ye of Chriſt? Whoſe ſon is he? They ſay unto him the ſon of David.* Matt. xxii. 41. I know, anſwered Jeſus, you ſay, Chriſt is the ſon of David; but how can they ſupport their opinion, or render it conſiſtent with the words of David? who himſelf calls him Lord; and *how is he his ſon?* It ſeems that the Jewiſh doctors did not imagine that their Meſſiah would be indued with any perfections greater than thoſe that might be enjoyed by human nature; for though they called him the ſon of God; they had no notion, that he was God, and therefore could not pretend to ſolve the difficulty. The latter queſtion however might have convinced them of their error; for if the Meſſiah was only to be a ſecular prince, as they ſuppoſed, and to rule over the men of his own time, he never could have been called *Lord*, by perſons who died before he was born; far leſs would ſo mighty a prince as David, who was alſo his progenitor, have conferred on him that title. Since therefore he rules over not only the vulgar dead of former ages, but even over the kings from whom he was himſelf deſcended, and his kingdom comprehends the men of all countries and times, paſt, preſent, and to come; the doctors, if they had thought accurately upon the ſubject, ſhould have expected in their Meſſiah a king different from all other kings whatever. Beſides, he is to ſit at God's right hand, *till all his enemies are made his footſtool.* Numbers of Chriſt's enemies are ſubject to him in this life; and they who will not bow to him willingly ſhall, like the rebellious ſubjects of other kingdoms, be reduced by puniſhment.

The clear and ſolid anſwers which he returned to the enſnaring queſtions

tions of his adverſaries, gave the people an high opinion of his wiſdom. And ſhewed them, how far ſuperior he was to their moſt renowned Rabbis, whoſe arguments to prove their opinions, and anſwers to the objections which were raiſed againſt him, were, in general, very weak and trifling. Nay, his foes themſelves, from the repeated proofs they had received from the prodigious depth of his underſtanding, were impreſſed with ſuch an opinion of his wiſdom, that they judged it impoſſible to entangle him in his talk. Accordingly, they left off attempting it, and from that day forth troubled him no more with their inſidious queſtions.

Thus did our bleſſed Saviour ſilent his moſt virulent oppoſers. But having mentioned the final conqueſt and deſtruction of his enemies, who were to be made his footſtool, agreeable to the prediction of the royal pſalmiſt, he turned towards his diſciples; and, in the hearing of the multitude, ſolemnly cautioned them to beware of the ſcribes and Phariſees; inſinuating thereby who the enemies were whoſe deſtruction he had mentioned. *The ſcribes and the Phariſees*, ſaid he, *ſit in Moſes ſeat. All therefore whatſoever they bid you obſerve, that obſerve and do: but do not ye after their works, for they ſay, and do not*, Matt. xxiii. 2, 3. While they teach the doctrines before delivered by Moſes, obſerve all they ſay; but by no means imitate their practices; for they impoſe many precepts on their diſciples which they never perform themſelves. *For they bind heavy burdens, and grievous to be born, and lay them on mens ſhoulders, but they themſelves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all the works they do for to be ſeen of men.* The difficult precepts they impoſe on others are never regarded by theſe hypocrites, and any good action they may happen to perform is vitiated by the principle from whence it proceeds. They do it only with a view to popular applauſe, and not from a regard to God, far leſs from a love of goodneſs. They are proud and arrogant to exceſs, as is plain from their affected gravity in their cloaths; from the anxiety they diſcover leſt they ſhould not obtain the principal ſeats in the public aſſemblies, and from their affecting to be ſaluted in the ſtreets with the ſounding titles of Rabbi and father. *They make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments. And love the uppermoſt rooms at feaſts, and the chief ſeats in the ſynagogues, and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men Rabbi, Rabbi*, Matt. xxiii. 5, 6, 7.

The word *Rabbi* ſignifies properly *great*, and was given to thoſe men who had rendered themſelves remarkable for the extent of their learning; it is therefore no wonder that the proud and ſupercilious Phariſees were fond of a title, which ſo highly complimented their underſtandings, and gave them great authority with their diſciples.

But the followers of the bleſſed Jeſus were to decline this title; becauſe the thing ſignified by it belonged ſolely to their maſter, in whom are hid all the treaſures of wiſdom

and knowledge and becauſe they owed no part of their knowledge to themſelves, but derived it entirely from him who came down from heaven. *But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your maſter, even Chriſt, and all ye are brethren. And call no man father upon earth: for one is your father which is in heaven*, Matt. xxiii. 8, 9. Life with all its bleſſings comes from God, and men wholly depend upon him; all praiſe and thankfulneſs, therefore, ſhould ultimately be referred to him; ſo that if any one teacheth rightly, not the teacher but the wiſdom of the Almighty is to be praiſed, which exerts and communicates itſelf by him.

Nor were the diſciples of our bleſſed Saviour to accept of the title of *maſter*, or *leader*, which the Jewiſh doctors alſo courted, becauſe in point of commiſſion and inſpiration they were all equal, neither had they any title to rule the conſciences of men, except by virtue of the inſpiration which they had received from their maſter, to whom alone the prerogative of infallibility belonged. *Neither be ye called maſters; for one is your maſter even Chriſt.*

Our bleſſed lord, however, did not intend by this to inſinuate, that it was ſinful to call men by the ſtations they held in the world; he only intended to reprove the ſimplicity of the common people, who loaded their teachers with praiſes, and forgot to aſcribe any thing to God; and to root out of the minds of his apoſtles the Phariſaical vanity, which decked itſelf with honours belonging ſolely to the Creator of the univerſe. Accordingly, that he might inſtil into their hearts humility to diſpoſe them to do good offices to one another, as occaſion offered, he aſſured them it was the only road to true greatneſs; for, by aſſuming what did not properly belong to them, they ſhould be deſpiſed both by God and men. Whereas they who did not diſdain to perform the meaneſt offices of love to their brethren ſhould enjoy a high degree of the divine favour.

The above diſcourſes greatly incenſed the ſcribes and Phariſees, as they were pronounced in the hearing of many of that order; it is therefore no wonder, that they watched every opportunity to deſtroy him. But this was not a time to put their bloody deſigns in execution: the people ſet too high a value on his doctrine to ſuffer any violence to be offered to his perſon; and as this was the laſt ſermon he was ever to preach in public, it was neceſſary, that he ſhould uſe ſome ſeverity, as all his mild perſuaſions had proved ineffectual.

Accordingly he denounced in the moſt ſolemn manner dreadful woes againſt them, not on account of the perſonal injuries he had received from them, but on account of their exceſſive wickedneſs. They were public teachers of religion; and therefore ſhould have uſed every method in their power to recommend its precepts to the people, and to have been themſelves ſhining examples of every duty it enjoined; but on the contrary they abuſed every mark and character of goodneſs for all the purpoſes of villany, and under the

cloke of a ſevere and ſanctified aſpect, they were malicious, implacable, lewd, covetous, and rapacious: in a word, inſtead of being reformers they were the corrupters of mankind, and conſequently their wickedneſs deſerved the greateſt reproof that could be given by the great Redeemer of mankind. *Wo unto you ſcribes and Phariſees, hypocrites; for ye ſhut up the kingdom of heaven againſt men; for you neither go in yourſelves, neither ſuffer them that were entering to go in. Wo unto you ſcribes and Phariſees, hypocrites; for ye devour widows houſes, and for a pretence make long prayer; therefore ye ſhall receive the greater damnation. Wo unto you, ſcribes and Phariſees, hypocrites; for ye compaſs ſea and land to make one proſelyte, and when he is made, ye make him two fold more the child of hell than yourſelves,* Matt. xxiii. 13, *&c.*

The puniſhment you ſhall ſuffer will be terribly ſevere, becauſe ye have given a wrong interpretation of the ancient prophecies concerning the Meſſiah, and done all that is in your power to hinder the people from repenting of their ſins, and believing the goſpel: becauſe you have committed the groſſeſt iniquities, and under the cloak of religion have devoured the ſubſtance of widows and orphans, hoping to hide your villanies by long prayers: becauſe ye have expreſſed the greateſt zeal imaginable in making proſelytes, not with a view to render the Gentiles more wiſe and virtuous, but to acquire their riches, and a command over their conſciences; and inſtead of teaching them the precepts of virtue and the moral duties of religion, you confine their duties to ſuperſtitious and ceremonial inſtitutions, and hence they often relapſe into their old ſtate of heatheniſm, and become more wicked than before your converſion, and conſequently liable to a more ſevere ſentence.

He alſo mentioned in a particular manner their doctrine concerning oaths; and declared, in oppoſition to their abominable tenets, that every oath, if the matter of it be lawful, is obligatory; becauſe, when men ſwear by any part of the creation, it is an appeal to the Creator himſelf; for in any other light an oath of this kind is abſolutely ridiculous, the object having neither knowledge of the fact, nor power to puniſh the perjury. *Wo unto you, ye blind guides, which ſay, whoſoever ſhall ſwear by the temple, it is nothing: but whoſoever ſhall ſwear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor. Ye fools, and blind, whether is greater the gold, or the temple that ſanctifieth the gold? And whoſoever ſhall ſwear by the altar it is nothing, but whoſoever ſweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty. Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that ſanctifieth the gift? Whoſo therefore ſhall ſwear by the altar, ſweareth by it, and by all things thereon. And whoſo ſhall ſwear by the temple, ſweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein. And he that ſhall ſwear by heaven, ſweareth by the throne of God, and by him that ſitteth thereon,* Matt. xxiii. 16, *&c.*

He alſo upbraided them with their ſuper-

ſuperſtitious practices, in obſerving the minuteſt parts of the ceremonial precepts of the law, and at the ſame time utterly neglecting the eternal and indiſpenſible rules of righteouſneſs. *Wo unto you, ſcribes and Phariſees, hypocrites; for ye pay tythe of mint, and aniſe, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith; theſe ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone*, Matt. xxiii. 23.

Nor did their hypocriſy eſcape the cenſure of the Son of God: they ſpared no pains to appear virtuous in the eyes of the world, and maintain an external conduct that ſhould require the praiſes of men, but at the ſame time neglected to adorn their ſouls with the robe of righteouſneſs, which is the only ornament that can render them dear in the ſight of the Maker. *Wo unto you ſcribes and Phariſees, hypocrites; for ye make clean the outſide of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and exceſs. Thou blind Phariſee, cleanſe firſt that which is within the cup and the platter, that the outſide may be clean alſo*, Matt. xxiii. 25, 26. Cleanſe firſt thy mind, thy inward man from evil diſpoſitions and affections, and the outward behaviour will of courſe be virtuous and praiſe-worthy.

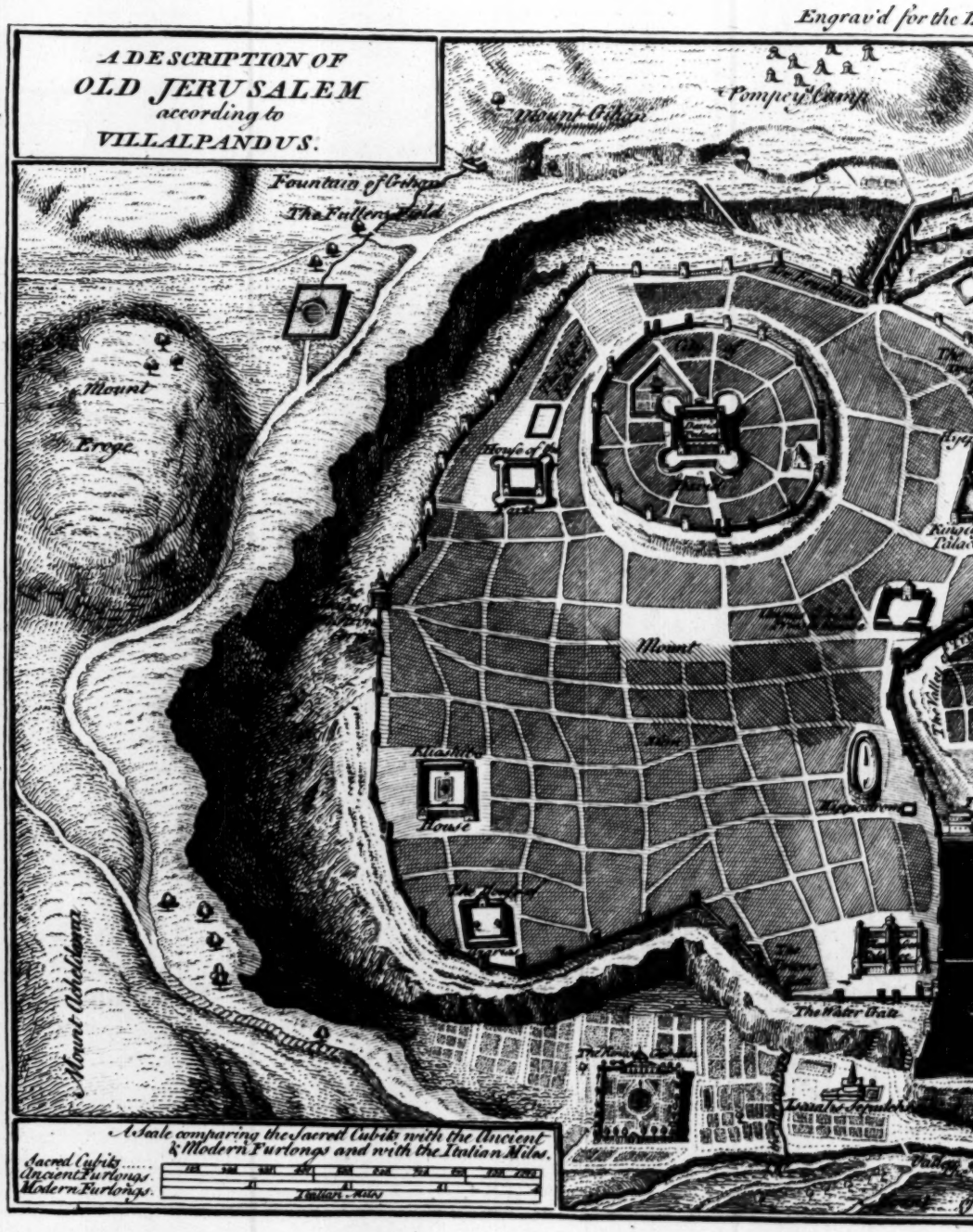
The ſucceſs of their hypocriſy was alſo animadverted upon by the bleſſed Jeſus. They deceived the ſimple and unthinking part of mankind with their pretended ſanctity, appearing like whited ſepulchres, beautiful on the outſide, while their internal parts were full of uncleaneſs. *Wo unto you, ſcribes and Phariſees, hypocrites; for ye are like unto whited ſepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanneſs. Even ſo ye alſo outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within are full of hypocriſy and iniquity*, Matt. xxiii. 27, 28.

Nor did the pains they had taken in adorning the ſepulchres of the prophets eſcape his cenſure; becauſe they pretended a great veneration for their memory, and even condemned their fathers who killed them, ſaying, that if they had lived in the days of their fathers, they would have oppoſed ſuch monſtrous wickedneſs, while, at the ſame time, all their actions abundantly proved that they ſtill cheriſhed the ſame ſpirit they condemned in their fathers, perſecuting the meſſengers of the moſt High, particularly his only begotten Son, whom they were determined to deſtroy. *Wo! unto you ſcribes and Phariſees, hypocrites; becauſe ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garniſh the ſepulchres of the righteous, and ſay, if we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witneſſes unto yourſelves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets*, Matt. xxiii. 29.

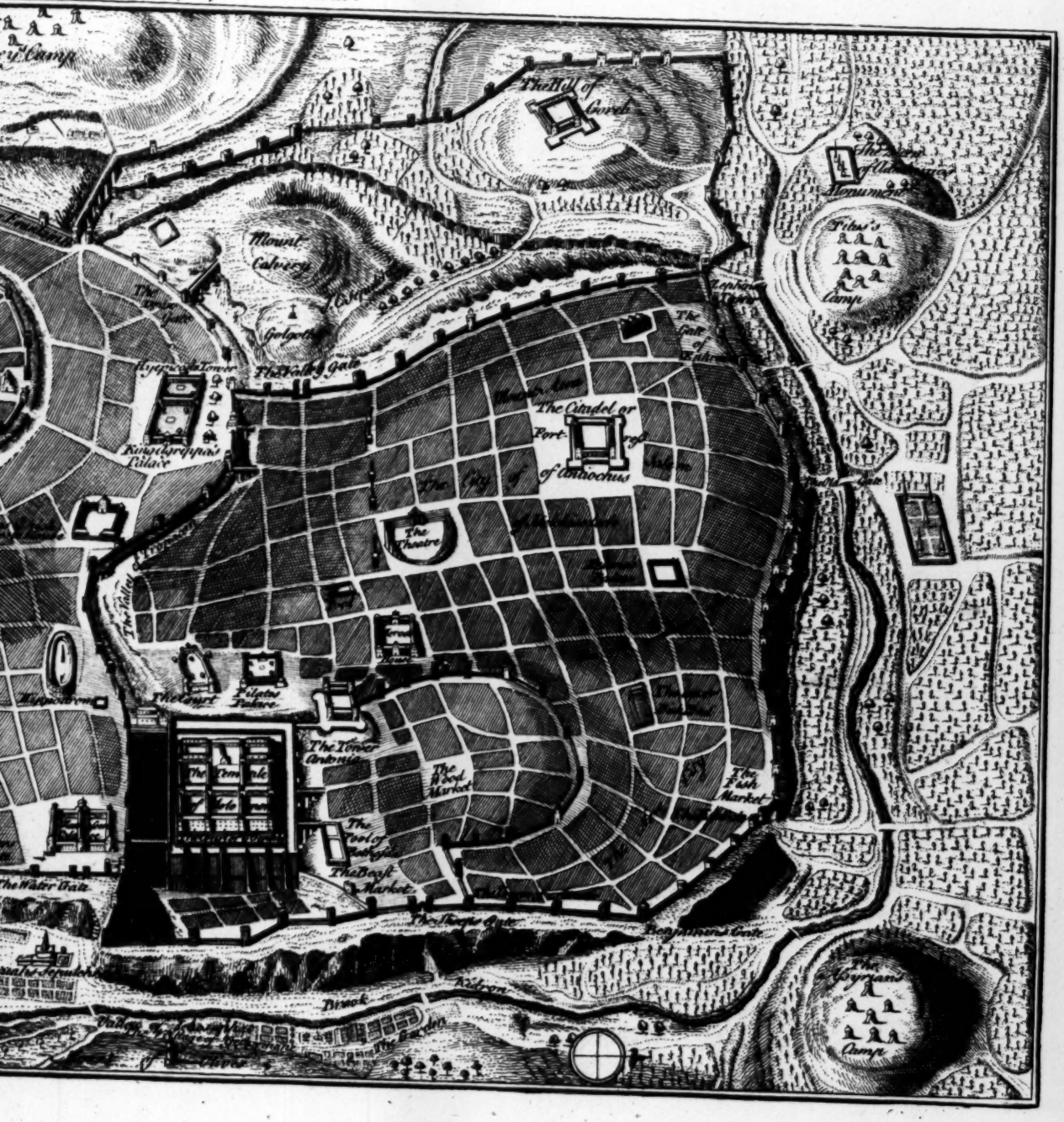
He added, that the divine Being was deſirous of trying every method for their converſion, though all theſe inſtances of mercy were ſlighted, and therefore they muſt expect ſuch terrible

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terrible vengeance, as ſhould be a ſtanding monument of the divine diſpleaſure againſt all the murders committed by the ſons of men, from the foundation of the world.

Having thus laid before them their heinous guilt and dreadful puniſhment; he was, at the thought of the calamities which were ſoon to fall upon them, exceedingly moved, and his breaſt filled with ſenſations of pity to ſuch a degree, that, unable to contain himſelf, he brake forth into tears, bewailing the hard lot of the city of Jeruſalem; for as its inhabitants had more deeply imbrued their hands in the blood of the prophets, they were to drink more deeply of the puniſhment due to ſuch crimes. *O Jeruſalem, Jeruſalem, thou that killeſt the prophets, and ſtoneſt them which are ſent unto thee: how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not? Behold your houſe is left unto you deſolate,* Matt. xxiii. 37, *&c.*

Such was the exclamation of the benevolent Redeemer of mankind: an exclamation that can hardly be read without a tear, and conveys a very ſtrong idea of his love for that ungrateful nation. How often had the Almighty called upon them to return from their evil way, before he ſent his only begotten Son into the world! how often, how emphatically did the compaſſionate Jeſus entreat them to embrace the merciful terms now offered them by the Almighty! and with what unconquerable obſtinacy did they refuſe the benevolent offers, and reſiſt the moſt winning expreſſions of the divine love! By the word *houſe*, our bleſſed Saviour meant the temple, which was from that time to be left unto them deſolate; the glory of the Lord, which Haggai had propheſied ſhould fill the ſecond houſe, was now departing from it. Adding, *I ſay unto you, ye ſhall not ſee me henceforth, till ye ſhall ſay, Bleſſed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.* As if he had ſaid, as ye have killed the prophets, and ſtoned me, who the Father hath ſent from the courts of heaven, and will ſhortly put me, who am the Lord of the temple, to death, your holy houſe ſhall be left deſolate, and your nation totally deſerted by me; nor ſhall you ſee me any more till the whole nation is converted to chriſtianity, when all the deſcendants of Jacob ſhall, with one voice, cry out as the multitude lately did, *Bleſſed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.*

Thus did the bleſſed Jeſus ſtrip the Scribes and Phariſees of their hypocritical maſk. He treated them with ſeverity, becauſe their crimes were of the blackeſt dye; and hence we ſhould learn to be really good, and not flatter ourſelves that we can cover our crimes with the cloak of hypocriſy from that piercing eye, to which nothing is concealed.

The people could not fail being aſtoniſhed at theſe diſcourſes, as they had always conſidered their teachers as the moſt righteous among the ſons of men. Nay, the perſons themſelves, againſt whom they were

levelled, were confounded, becauſe their own conſciences convinced them of the truth of every particular laid to their charge. They, therefore, knew not what courſe to purſue; and in the midſt of their heſitation, they let Jeſus depart without making any attempt to ſeize him, or inflict on him any kind of puniſhment.

CHAP. XXX.

Jeſus applauds the widow's gift. Foretels the deſtruction of the temple. And delivers the parables of the virgins, talents, and laſt judgment.

OUR bleſſed Saviour having thus expoſed the ſecret practices of the Scribes and Phariſees, repaired with his diſciples into the court of the women, called the treaſury, from ſeveral cheſts being fixed to the pillars of the portico ſurrounding the court, for receiving the offerings of thoſe who came to worſhip in the temple. While he continued in this court, *he beheld how the people caſt money into the treaſury: and many that were rich caſt in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and ſhe threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And he called unto him his diſciples, and ſaith unto them, Verily I ſay unto you, that this poor widow hath caſt more in, than all they which have caſt into the treaſury. For all they did caſt in of their abundance: but ſhe of her want, did caſt in all that ſhe had, even all her living*, Mark xii. 41, *&c.*

Though the offering given by this poor widow, was in itſelf very ſmall, yet, in proportion to the goods of fortune ſhe enjoyed, it was remarkably large; for it was all ſhe had, even all her living. In order, therefore, to encourage charity, and ſhew that it is the diſpoſition of the mind, not the magnificence of the offering that attracted the regard of the Almighty, the Son of God applauded this poor widow, as having given more in proportion than any of the rich. Their offerings, though great in reſpect of hers, were but a ſmall part of their eſtates, whereas, her offering was her whole ſtock. And from this paſſage of the goſpel we ſhould learn, that the poor, who in appearance are denied the means of doing charitable offices, are encouraged to do all they can. For how ſmall ſoever the gift may be, the Almighty, who beholds the heart, values it, not according to what it is in itſelf, but according to the diſpoſition with which it is given. On the other hand, we ſhould learn from hence, that it is not enough for the rich, that they exceed the poor in their gifts of charity; they ſhould beſtow in proportion to their fortune; and they would do well to remember, that a little given, where a little only is left, appears a much nobler offering in the ſight of the Almighty, and diſcovers a more benevolent and humane temper of mind, than ſums vaſtly larger beſtowed out of a plentiful abundance.

The diſciples now remembered that their maſter, at the concluſion of his pathetic lamentation over Jeruſalem, had declared that the temple ſhould not

not any more be favoured with his preſence, till they ſhould ſay, *Bleſſed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.* A reſolution of this kind could not fail of greatly ſurprizing his diſciples; and, therefore, as he was departing from that ſacred ſtructure, they deſired him to obſerve the beauty of the building; inſinuating, that they thought it ſtrange he ſhould intimate an intention of leaving it deſolate; that ſo glorious a fabric, celebrated in every corner of the earth, was not to be deſerted raſhly: and that they ſhould think themſelves ſupremely happy, when he, as the Meſſiah and deſcendant of David, ſhould take poſſeſſion of it, and erect his throne in the midſt of Jeruſalem. And as they went out of the temple one of his diſciples ſaith unto him, *Maſter, ſee what manner of ſtones, and what buildings are here.* The eaſtern wall of the temple, which fronted the mount of Olives, whither the diſciples, with their maſter, were then retiring, was built from the bottom of the valley to a prodigious height, with ſtones of an incredible bulk firmly compacted together, and therefore made a very grand appearance at a diſtance. This eaſtern wall is ſuppoſed to have been the only remains of Solomon's temple, and had eſcaped when the Chaldeans burnt it. But this building, however coſtly or ſtrong it appeared, our Saviour told them ſhould be totally deſtroyed, *Seeſt thou,* ſaid he, *theſe great buildings? there ſhall not be left one ſtone upon another that ſhall not be thrown down,* Mark xiii. 2.

This ſuperb work which you behold with wonder, adorned with huge ſtones of amazing beauty, ſhall be razed to the very foundation. The diſciples, therefore, when they heard their maſter affirm, that not ſo much as one of theſe enormous ſtones, which had mocked the fury of Nabuchadnezzar's army, and ſurvived the deſtructive hand of time, was to be left one upon another, they perceived that the whole temple was to be demoliſhed, but did not ſuſpect that the ſacrifices were to be taken away, and a new religion introduced, which rendered the temple unneceſſary. They, therefore, flattered themſelves, that the fabric then ſtanding, however glorious it might appear, was too ſmall for the numerous worſhippers who would frequent it, when all the nations of the world were ſubject to the Meſſiah's kingdom, and was therefore to be pulled down, in order to be erected on a more magnificent plan ſuitable to the idea they had conceived of his future empire. Filled with theſe pleaſing imaginations, they received the news with pleaſure, meditating, as they walked to the mountain, on the glorious things which were ſhortly to come to paſs.

When they arrived on the mount of Olives, and their Maſter had taken his ſeat on ſome eminence, from whence they had a proſpect of the temple and part of the city, his diſciples drew near, to know when the demolition of the old ſtructure was to happen, and what were to be the ſigns of his coming, and of the end

of the world. *And as he ſate upon the mount of Olives, the diſciples came unto him privately, ſaying, Tell us, when ſhall theſe things be? and what ſhall be the ſign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?* Matt. xxiv. 3.

The diſciples probably meant what ſigns ſhould precede the erection of that extenſive empire, over which they ſuppoſed the Meſſiah was to reign; for they ſtill expected he would govern a ſecular kingom. They therefore connected the demolition of the temple with their maſter's coming, though they had not the leaſt notion that he was to deſtroy the nation, and change the form of religious worſhip. They therefore meant by the *end of the world*, or as the words ſhould have been tranſlated, *the end of the age*, the period of the political government then executed by heathen procurators; and conſidered their Maſter's coming to deſtroy the conſtitution then ſubſiſting, as a very deſirable event. They alſo thought the demolition of the temple proper, as they expected a larger and more ſuperb building, proportioned to the number of the Meſſiah's ſubjects, would be erected in its ſtead.

That this is the real ſenſe of the diſciples queſtion, will ſufficiently appear, if we conſider that the diſciples were delighted with the proſpect; whereas, if they had meant by the end of the world, the final period of all things, the deſtruction of the temple would have exhibited to them, in their preſent temper of mind, a melancholy proſpect, which they could not have beheld without a deep concern.

Our bleſſed Saviour, therefore, was careful to convince them oftt heir miſtake, by telling them tha he was not come to rule a ſecular empire, as they ſuppoſed, but to puniſh the Jews for their perfidy and rebellion, by deſtroying both their temple and nation. *Take heed*, ſaid he, *that no man deceive you. For many ſhall come in my name, ſaying I am Chriſt, and ſhall deceive many.* This caution was far from being unneceſſary, becauſe, though the diſciples were to ſee their maſter aſcend into heaven, they might take occaſion from the prophecy, to think that he would appear again on earth, and therefore be in danger of ſeduction by the falſe Chriſts that ſhould ariſe. *And when ye ſhall hear of wars and rumours of wars, ſee that ye be not troubled, for all theſe things muſt come to paſs; but the end is not yet.* Before this nation and temple are deſtroyed, terrible wars will happen in the land: *For nation ſhall riſe againſt nation, and kingdom againſt kingdom: and there ſhall be famine and peſtilence, and earthquakes in divers places*, Matt. xxiv. 7.

But all theſe are no more than the beginning of a long ſeries of calamities, which ſhall fall upon this nation. At the ſame time you ſhall meet with hot perſecutions; walk, therefore, circumſpectly, and arm yourſelves both with patience and fortitude, that ye may be able to perform your duty, through the whole courſe of theſe perſecutions; for you ſhall be brought before the great

great men of the earth for my ſake. *But when they ſhall lead you and deliver you up, take no thought before hand what you ſhall ſpeak, neither do you premeditate: but whatſoever ſhall be given you in that hour, that ſpeak ye; for it is not ye that ſpeak, but the Holy Ghoſt*, Mark xiii. 11.

During this time of trouble and confuſion, he told them, the perfidy of mankind ſhall be ſo great towards one another, that *brother ſhall betray the brother to death, and the father the ſon: and children ſhall riſe up againſt their parents, and ſhall cauſe them to be put to death.* The unbelieving Jews and apoſtate Chriſtians, ſhall commit ſuch crimes, that the very idea of which ſhall excite horror in the moſt barbarous nations. It is, therefore, no wonder that the perfidy and wickedneſs of ſuch pretended chriſtians, ſhall diſcourage many diſciples, and greatly hinder the propagation of the goſpel. But he who ſupports his faith, during theſe perſecutions, and is not led aſtray by the ſeduction of falſe chriſtians, ſhall eſcape that terrible deſtruction, which, like a deluge, will overflow the land.

Theſe perſecutions and tribulations ſhall ſcatter my diſciples, who ſhall preach the goſpel in all parts of the Roman empire; and then ſhall the period you now enquire after arrive. Then ſhall the Almighty ariſe to vengeance, and conſume this ſtiff-necked generation in his anger.

And when Jeruſalem ſhall be ſurrounded with armies, Pagan armies, bearing in their ſtandards the images of their gods, the *abomination of deſolation*, mentioned by the prophet Daniel; then let him, who readeth the predictions of that prophet underſtand, that the end of the city and ſanctuary, together with the ceaſing of the ſacrifice and oblation there predicted, is come, and conſequently the final period of the Jewiſh polity.

Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midſt of it depart out, Luke xxi. 21. *Let him which is on the houſe top, not come down to take any thing out of his houſe. Neither let him which is in the field, return back to take his cloaths*, Matt. xxiv. 17, 18. For the Almighty will now puniſh this nation for its ſin: theſe are the days of his vengeance, when all the threatenings of the prophets, eſpecially thoſe of Daniel, ſhall be inflicted on this rebellious, this obſtinate people.

In thoſe days of vengeance, the women who are with child, and they who have infants hanging at their breaſts, ſhall be particularly unhappy, becauſe they cannot flee from the impending deſtruction. *But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter*, when the badneſs of the roads, and the rigour of the ſeaſon, will render ſpeedy travelling very troubleſome, if not impoſſible, *neither on the ſabbath-day*, when you ſhall think it unlawful. *For then ſhall be great tribulation, ſuch as was not ſince the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever ſhall be.* This is confirmed by what Joſephus tells us, that no leſs than eleven hundred thouſand periſhed in the ſiege.

Our

Our bleſſed Saviour added, that except theſe days of tribulation ſhould be ſhortened, none of the inhabitants of Jeruſalem and Judea, of whom he is ſpeaking, ſhould eſcape deſtruction. And accordingly Joſephus tells us, that the quarrels which raged during the ſiege, were ſo fierce and obſtinate, that both within the walls of Jeruſalem, and without in the neighbouring country, that the whole land was one continued ſcene of horror and deſolation: and had the ſiege continued much longer, the whole nation of the Jews had been totally deſtroyed, according to our Lord's prediction. *But*, added our bleſſed Saviour, *for the elects ſake, whom he hath choſen, he hath ſhortened the days.* By the elect are meant, ſuch of the Jews as had embraced the doctrines of the goſpel, and particularly thoſe who were brought in with the fulneſs of the Gentiles.

It was natural to think, that during this time of univerſal confuſion, the expectations of the whole nation would be turned towards their Meſſiah; for if he was ever to appear it muſt be then, to deliver them from impending deſtruction. Our bleſſed Saviour therefore cautioned his diſciples not to liſten to any pretences of that kind, as many falſe Chriſts would ariſe, and deceive great numbers of the people. A prediction that was fully accompliſhed during the terrible ſiege of Jeruſalem by the Romans; for Joſephus tells us, that many aroſe pretending to be the Meſſiah, boaſting that they would deliver the nation from all its enemies. And the multitude, always too prone to liſten to deceivers who promiſe temporal advantages, gave credit to thoſe deceivers, became more obſtinate in their oppoſition to the Romans, and thereby rendered their deſtruction more ſevere and more inevitable. And what ſtill increaſed the infatuation of the people, was their performing wonderful things during the war; and accordingly Joſephus calls them magicians and ſorcerers. Hence we ſee the propriety of the caution given by the Son of God, who foretold that *they ſhould ſhew great ſigns and wonders, inſomuch that if it were poſſible they would deceive the very Elect. But take heed: behold, I have foretold you all things.*

And as the partizans of the falſe Chriſts might pretend that the Meſſiah was concealed a while for fear of the Romans, and the weaker ſort of chriſtians, without this warning have imagined, that Chriſt was actually returned to deliver the nation in its extremity, and to puniſh their enemies, who now ſo cruelly oppreſſed them, and that he would ſhew himſelf as ſoon as it was proper, the bleſſed Jeſus thought proper to caution them againſt this particular: *Wherefore, if they ſhall ſay unto you, behold, he is in the deſert, go not forth: behold, he is in the ſecret chambers, believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the eaſt, and ſhineth even unto the weſt; ſo ſhall alſo the coming of the Son of man be,* Matt. xxiv. 26, *&c.*

The coming of the ſon of man ſhall be like lightning, ſwift and deſtructive.

deſtructive. But he will not come perſonally, his ſervants only ſhall come, the Roman armies, who, by his command, ſhall deſtroy this nation as eagles devour their prey.

Having thus given them a particular account of the various circumſtances which ſhould precede the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, he next deſcribed that cataſtrophe itſelf, in all the pomp of language and imagery made uſe of by the ancient prophets, when they foretold the deſtruction of cities and kingdoms. *But in thoſe days after that tribulation, the ſun ſhall be darkened, and the moon ſhall not give her light: and the ſtars of heaven ſhall fall, and the powers that are in heaven ſhall be ſhaken*, Mark xiii. 24, *&c. And upon the earth diſtreſs of nations, with perplexity; the ſea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after thoſe things which are coming on the earth*, Luke xxi. 25, *&c.*

Theſe are lofty and figurative expreſſions, and ſignify the decaying of all the glory, excellency, and proſperity of the nation, and the introduction of univerſal ſadneſs, miſery, and confuſion. The roaring of the ſea and the waves may juſtly be conſidered as metaphorical, as the ſigns in the ſun, in the moon, and in the ſtars are plainly ſo. And by the powers of heaven are meant the whole Jewiſh polity, government, laws, and religion, which were the work of heaven; theſe our bleſſed Saviour tells us ſhould be ſhaken, or rather utterly diſſolved.

And as the diſciples had, in conformity to the repeated queſtions of the Phariſees during his miniſtry, aſked what ſhould be the ſign of his coming; our bleſſed Saviour told them, that after the tribulation of thoſe days, when the ſun ſhould be darkened and all the enemies of the Meſſiah ſhould mourn, they ſhould ſee the accompliſhment of what Daniel foretold, by the figurative expreſſion of *the ſon of man coming in the clouds of heaven*; for they ſhould behold the ſignal puniſhments executed on the Jewiſh nation, by the Roman armies ſent for that end by the ſon of man, who ſhall thus glorioufly demonſtrate the greatneſs of his power, and the extent of his dominion. *Then ſhall appear the ſign of the ſon of man coming in heaven: and then ſhall all the families of the earth mourn. And they ſhall ſee the ſon of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory*, Matt. xxiv. 29, 30.

When theſe things came to paſs, the diſciples were to conſider the time of their redemption, from the oppreſſion under which they then groaned, as near at hand: and that they might be certain this prophecy would not long wait for its accompliſhment, he told them that the preſent generation ſhould not all be laid in the chambers of the duſt, before theſe terrible calamities ſhould fall upon Jeruſalem. Adding, that his diſciples might ſooner expect the diſſolution of the whole frame of nature, than that one ſingle circumſtance of this prophecy ſhould fail of its accompliſhment. *Verily I ſay unto you, This generation ſhall not paſs*

till

till all theſe things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth ſhall paſs away, but my words ſhall not paſs away, Matt. xxiv. 34, 35.

Whoever ſhall take the pains to compare the prediction of our Saviour with the hiſtory Joſephus wrote of the war, cannot fail of being ſtruck with the wiſdom of Chriſt, and acknowledging that his prediction was truly divine. For as the Jewiſh nation was at this time in the moſt flouriſhing ſtate, the event here foretold was altogether improbable. Beſides, the circumſtances of the deſtruction are very numerous and ſurprizingly particular; and the whole delivered without any ambiguity. It is therefore a prophecy of ſuch a kind as could never have been uttered by any impoſtor, and conſequently the perſon who delivered it, was acquainted with the ſecret councils of heaven, and truly divine.

But it has, with ſome aſſurance been demanded, by the enemies to revelation, why Chriſt ſhould order his diſciples not to flee from Jeruſalem, till they ſaw it encompaſſed with the Roman army, when it would then be impoſſible for them to make their eſcape? But perſons, before they propoſe ſuch queſtions, would do well to read attentively the hiſtory Joſephus has given us of theſe terrible calamities; becauſe they would there find a ſolution to the difficulty. That hiſtorian tells us (Bel. ii. 39.) That Ceſtius Gallus ſurrounded the city with his army, and at a time when he could eaſily have taken the city, ſuddenly withdrew his forces, without any apparent reaſon. He adds, that as ſoon as the ſiege was raiſed, many eminent Jews fled from it, as from a ſinking ſhip. In all probability many of theſe were chriſtians, who being warned by this prophecy of their great Maſter, ſaved themſelves by flight, as he had directed. Thus we ſee what frivolous objections are made by the free-thinkers of our age, againſt the truth of the ſacred writings, and how eaſily they are anſwered. And I cannot help obſerving, that this conduct of the Roman general, ſo contrary to all the rules of prudence, muſt have been brought to paſs by the providence of God, who interpoſed in this manner for the deliverance of the diſciples.

Our bleſſed Saviour having given this deſcription of the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, and enumerated a great variety of particulars that were to precede or accompany it, aſſured his diſciples that it would be very unexpected, and thence urged the neceſſity of a watchful vigilance, leſt they ſhould be ſurpriſed, and have a ſhare in thoſe terrible calamities. *But as the days of Noe were, ſo ſhall alſo the coming of the ſon of man be*, Matt. xxiv. 37. *Watch ye therefore (for ye know not when the maſter of the houſe cometh; at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning) leſt coming ſuddenly, he find you ſleeping*, Mark xiii. 35, 36.

It was natural, as men were to undergo, at the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, nearly the ſame miſeries, and as the paſſions which its approach would raiſe in their minds were ſimilar to

thoſe which will happen at the deſtruction of the world and the general judgment. It was natural, I ſay, for our bleſſed Saviour on this occaſion to put his diſciples in mind of that judgment, and to exhort them to the faithful diſcharge of their duty, from the conſideration of the ſuddenneſs of his coming to call every individual to account after death: *therefore be ye alſo ready; for in ſuch an hour, as ye think not, the Son of man cometh. Who then is a faithful and wiſe ſervant, whom his Lord hath made ruler over his houſhold, to give them meat in due ſeaſon? Bleſſed is that ſervant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, ſhall find ſo doing. Verily I ſay unto you, that he ſhall make him ruler over all his goods*, Matt. xxiv. 44. *&c.* As if he had ſaid, you who are the miniſters of religion, ought to be particularly careful to diſcharge the important truſt committed to your care: you are the ſtewards to whoſe care the whole houſhold of the church is committed; and you would do well to remember, that your example will have a great effect upon the minds of thoſe employed under you. It is your duty to be well acquainted with the ſtores of the evangelical truths, and to underſtand how they may be applied to the beſt advantage: you ſhould alſo be careful to know the characters of the different perſons under your direction, that you may be able to give every one of them his portion of meat in due ſeaſon: and if I find you thus employed at my coming, I will reward you with the joys of my kingdom, even as an earthly maſter beſtows particular marks of reſpect on ſuch ſervants as have been remarkably faithful in any important truſt.

But, on the other hand, if you behave like unjuſt ſtewards, who, becauſe their Lord delayeth his coming, abuſe their fellow-ſervants, and riot in exceſs; if you tyrannize over the conſciences of your brethren, neglect the duties of your function, and give yourſelves up to ſenſual pleaſures, I will come upon you unexpectedly, and make you dreadful examples of mine anger, by the ſevere puniſhments which I will inflict upon you. *But and if that evil ſervant ſhall ſay in his heart, my Lord delayeth his coming, and ſhall begin to ſmite his fellow-ſervants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the lord of that ſervant ſhall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of; and ſhall cut him aſunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there ſhall be weeping and gnaſhing of teeth*, Matt. xxiv. 48, *&c.*

Our bleſſed Saviour having thus mentioned the rewards and puniſhments of a future ſtate, it was eaſy and elegant to paſs from that ſubject to the conſideration of the general judgment, when thoſe rewards and puniſhments ſhould be diſtributed in their utmoſt extent. This could not fail of animating his diſciples to a vigorous diſcharge of their duty; and by the ſtriking repreſentation of the laſt judgment he has here given, muſt greatly tend to rouſe the conſciences of men from their lethargy, and conſider, before it be too late,

the things which belong to their peace.

" Then ſhall the kingdom of hea-
" ven, the goſpel-kingdom, in the
" laſt diſpenſation of it, when the
" kingdom of grace is going to be
" ſwallowed up in the kingdom of
" glory, be likened unto ten virgins
" which took their lamps, and went
" forth to meet the bridegroom.
" And five of them were wiſe and
" five of them were fooliſh; they
" that were fooliſh, as a proof of
" their ſtupidity, took indeed their
" lamps, but put no oil in their veſ-
" ſels, while the wiſe, as an inſtance
" of their prudence and foreſight,
" took both their lamps and oil in
" their veſſels, knowing that it was
" uncertain when the bridegroom
" would arrive, and that they might,
" in all probability wait long for his
" coming. Nor were they miſtaken,
" for the bridegroom did not come
" ſo ſoon as they expected. And
" while he tarried they all ſlumber-
" ed and ſlept, and at midnight
" there was a great cry made, be-
" hold the bridegroom cometh, go
" ye out to meet him; upon which
" all thoſe virgins roſe and trimmed
" their lamps, and the fooliſh ſaid
" unto the wiſe, give us of your oil
" for our lamps are gone out. But
" the wiſe anſwered, ſaying, not
" ſo, leſt there be not enough for
" us and you; but go ye rather to
" them that ſell, and buy for your-
" ſelves, and while they went to
" buy, the bridegroom came, and
" they that were ready went in with
" him to the marriage, and the door
" was ſhut. Afterwards, alſo, came
" the other virgins, ſaying, Lord,
" Lord, open unto us. But he from
" within anſwered, and ſaid unto
" them, Verily I ſay unto you, I
" know you not." *Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day, nor the hour, wherein the ſon of man cometh.*

In order to underſtand this parable, we muſt remember, that it alludes to the cuſtoms of marriages among the eaſtern people. It was uſual with them for the bridegroom to bring his bride home in the evening, ſooner or later, as circumſtances might happen; and, that ſhe might be received properly at his houſe, his female acquaintance, eſpecially thoſe of the younger ſort, were invited to come and wait with lamps, till ſome of his retinue, diſpatched before the reſt, informed them that he was near at hand; upon which they trimmed their lamps, went forth to welcome him, and conduct him with his bride into the houſe; for which they were honoured as gueſts at the marriage-feaſts, and ſhared in the uſual feſtivities.

To ten ſuch virgins our bleſſed Saviour compares the candidates for the kingdom of heaven: he mentions ten, becauſe this was the general number appointed to wait on the bridegroom; and to theſe all chriſtian profeſſors may be likened, who, taking the lamp of chriſtian profeſſion, go forth to meet the bridgroom; that is, prepare themſelves as candidates for the kingdom of heaven, and deſire to be admitted with Chriſt, the celeſtial bridgroom, into

into the happy manſions of immortality.

But the caſe of chriſtians is repreſented to us by this of the virgins, half of whom only were wiſe, the other half being fooliſh. And we muſt remember, that there always was, and always will be, a mixture of good and bad in the church, till the great day of ſeparation arrives. The weakneſs of the fooliſh is repreſented by their taking no oil in their veſſels with their lamps; that is, the fooliſh chriſtians content themſelves with the bare lamp of a profeſſion, and never think of furniſhing it with the oil of divine grace, the fruit of which is a life of holineſs. Whereas the wiſe, well knowing that a lamp, without the ſupply of oil, would be ſpeedily extinguiſhed; that faith, without love and holineſs, will be of no conſequence, take care to ſupply themſelves with a ſufficient quantity of the divine grace, and to diſplay in their lives the works of love and charity.

While all thoſe virgins, though differently ſupplied, waited the coming of the bridegroom, they all ſlumbered and ſlept; that is, all chriſtians, both good and bad, the ſincere and the hypocrite, all lie down together in the ſleep of death; and, while the bridgroom delayeth his coming, ſlumber in the chambers of the duſt.

The Jews have a tradition, that Chriſt's coming to judgment will be at midnight, which agrees with that particular in the parable, *at midnight there was a cry made, go ye out to meet him.* But however this be, whether he will come at midnight, or in the morning, it will be awfully ſudden and alarming. The great cry will be heard to the ends of the earth; the trumpet ſhall ſound, and the mighty archangel's voice pierce even to the bowels of the earth, and the depths of the ocean. *Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him.*

All that are in the graves muſt then awake, and come forth; and all will then begin to think how they may prepare themſelves to find admittance to the marriage-ſupper of the lamb. *Then all thoſe virgins aroſe, and trimmed their lamps.* But the fooliſh ſoon perceived their folly; their lamps were gone out, totally extinguiſhed; and they had no oil to ſupport the flame: in like manner the hypocrite's hope ſhall periſh. But the wiſe were in a much happier condition; they had oil in their veſſels ſufficient for themſelves, but none to ſpare; for, when the fooliſh virgins would have procured ſome from them, they denied their requeſt, fearing there would not be enough for both.

Here we have a repreſentation of nominal and ſincere chriſtians; the former having only the bare lamp of a profeſſion, but have neglected to live agreeably to the precepts and examples of their maſter; who have not been ſollicitous to gain the oil of divine grace, by a conſtant uſe of the means aſſigned; thoſe who have been contented with a mere negative righteouſneſs, with ſuch a juſtice and honeſty as heathens boaſted of, to whoſe charge no heinous

crimes can be laid, while, at the ſame time, no good can be ſpoken of, as an effect of their faith; and ſuch will fare like the fooliſh virgins. While the latter, whoſe wiſe conduct and zealous endeavours to ſtock their lamps with divine oil, will, like the wiſe virgins, enter into the joy of their Lord.

But the fooliſh, going to purchaſe oil, miſſed the bridegroom, and behold *the door was ſhut*. They at laſt however reached the gate, and with great importunity cried, *Lord, Lord, open unto us*. But he anſwered and ſaid, *Verily I ſay unto you, I know you not*. You are ſtrangers to me; you did not attend me at my coming, and now the door is ſhut, and entrance for ever denied; depart from me all ye workers of iniquity.

How juſtly therefore did our bleſſed Saviour bid us all *watch*, that we may be found ready whenever he cometh; or commands, by the king of terrors, our attendance before his judgment-ſeat. Let us not refuſe this kind invitation of being conſtantly prepared to meet the heavenly bridegroom: let us fill our lamps with oil, that we may be ready to follow our great maſter into the happy manſions of the heavenly Canaan.

But, as this duty was of the utmoſt importance, our bleſſed Saviour, to ſhew us more clearly the nature and uſe of chriſtian watchfulneſs, to which he exhorts us at the concluſion of the parable of the ten virgins, he added another, wherein he repreſented the different characters of a faithful and ſlothful ſervant, and the difference of their future acceptation. This parable, like the former, is intended to ſtir us up to a zealous preparation for the coming of our Lord, by diligence in the diſcharge of our duty, and by a careful improvement of our ſouls in holineſs; and at the ſame time to expoſe the vain pretences of hypocrites, and to demonſtrate, that fair ſpeeches and outward form, without the power of godlineſs, will be of no ſervice in the laſt great day of accounts.

The ſon of man, ſaid he, may, with reſpect to his final coming to judge the world, be likened, *unto a man travelling into a far country, who called his own ſervants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his ſeveral abilities: and ſtraitway took his journey.*

Immediately, on his maſter's departure, he that had received the five talents, loſt no time, but went and traded with the ſame, and his increaſe was equal to his induſtry and application; he made them other five talents. He that had received two talents did the ſame, and had equal ſucceſs. But he, that received one, very unlike the conduct of his fellow-ſervants, went his way, digged in the earth, and hid his Lord's money, idle, uſeleſs, unemployed, and unimproved.

After a long time, and at an hour when they did not expect it, the Lord of thoſe ſervants returned, called them before him, and ordered them to give an account of their

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ſeveral truſts. Upon which he that had received five talents, as a proof of his fidelity, produced other five talents, ſaying, *Lord, thou deliveredſt unto me five talents; behold I have gained beſides them five talents more.* His Lord, highly applauding his induſtry and fidelity, ſaid to him, *Well done, thou good and faithful ſervant; thou haſt been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.* In like manner alſo, he that had received two talents declared he had gained two others: upon which he was honoured with the ſame applauſe, and admitted into the ſame joy with his fellow-ſervant; their maſter having regard to the induſtry and fidelity of his ſervants, not to the number of the talents only, and the greatneſs of their increaſe.

After this, he that had received the one talent, came, and with a ſhameful falſehood, to excuſe his vile indolence, ſaid, *Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou haſt not ſown, and gathering where thou haſt not ſtrawed: and I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou haſt that is thine.*

This diſhonourable notion, which the ſervant entertained of his Lord, greatly aggravated his crime; and accordingly his Lord was wrath, and anſwered, *Thou wicked and ſlothful ſervant, thou kneweſt that I reap where I ſowed not, and gathered where I have not ſtrawed; thou oughteſt therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then, at my coming, I ſhould have received mine own with uſury. Take, therefore, the talent from him, and give it unto him that hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath ſhall be given, and he ſhall have abundance: but from him that hath not, ſhall be taken away, even that which he hath. And caſt ye the unprofitable ſervant into outer darkneſs, there ſhall be weeping and gnaſhing of teeth,* Matt. xxv. 26, &c.

Such is the parable of the talents, as delivered by our bleſſed Saviour: a parable containing the meaſures of our duty to God, and the motives that inforce it, all delivered in the plaineſt and ſimpleſt alluſion. But its views are ſo extenſive and affecting, that while it inſtructs the meaneſt capacity, it engages reverence and attention from the greateſt, and ſtrikes an impreſſion on the moſt improved underſtanding. We are to conſider God as our Lord and Maſter, the author and giver of every good gift, and ourſelves as his ſervants or ſtewards, who, in various inſtances and meaſures, have received from his goodneſs ſuch bleſſings and abilities, as may fit us for the ſeveral ſtations and offices of life to which his providence appoints us. But then we are to obſerve, that theſe are committed to us as a truſt or loan, for whoſe due management we are accountable to the donor. If we faithfully acquit ourſelves of this probationary charge, we ſhall receive far greater inſtances of God's confidence and favour; but if we are remiſs and negligent, we muſt expect to feel his reſentment and diſpleaſure. A time will come, and

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how near it may be, none of us can tell, when our great Maſter will demand a particular account of every talent he hath committed to our care. This time may, indeed, be at a diſtance, for it is uncertain when the king of terrors will receive the aweful warrant to terminate our exiſtance here below; yet it will certainly come, and our eternal happineſs or miſery depends upon it; ſo that we ſhould have it continually in our thoughts, and engrave it, as with the point of a diamond, on the tables of our hearts.

But this is not all we are to learn from this inſtructive parable; the Divine Author has adapted every incident of the relation to convey ſome ſpiritual inſtruction. We hence learn, that infinite wiſdom hath entruſted men with different talents, and adjuſted them to the various purpoſes of human life. But though the gifts of men are unequal, none can, with juſtice complain, ſince whatever is beſtowed, be it more or leſs, is a favour entirely unmerited. Each then ſhould be thankful, and ſatisfied with his portion; and, inſtead of envying the more liberal endowments of others, apply himſelf to the improvement of his own. And it ſhould be attentively obſerved, that the difficulty of the taſk is in proportion to the number of talents committed to each. He who had received five was to gain other five; and he who had received two, was to account for other two. Surely then, we have no reaſon to complain if our maſter has laid on us a lighter burden, a more eaſy and leſs ſervice than what he has on others. Eſpecially as our intereſt, in the favour of the Almighty, does not depend on the number of our talents, but on our diligence and application in the management of them: ſo that the moral deſign of this parable, is to engage our utmoſt attention, to improve ſuch talents as our heavenly Father has thought proper to beſtow upon us.

By theſe talents are principally meant the communications and graces of the holy Spirit, which God beſtows in different meaſures, *dividing to every man ſeverally as he will.* And ſubordinate to theſe are all the means, opportunities, and abilities to exerciſe or improve theſe graces; all the advantages of ſtation, fortune, education, and whatever may enable us to do good: for we having received all we enjoy from God, are ſtrictly obliged to promote the wiſe ends for which he beſtows his favour. And here let us take a ſhort and imperfect view of what God has done for us. He has given us reaſon and underſtanding, to diſcern good from evil, and to enquire into the cauſes, relations, and conſequences of things, to collect from them proper rules of judgment, and actions. Indeed, ſince the fall, this faculty has been much obſcured; but ſtill it remains an univerſal gift of God to men; and though not equal to all, yet it is given to every man in ſuch meaſure, as is ſufficient for their direction. In the knowledge of our duty, and the purſuit of our happineſs, God has, by the goſpel

goſpel, ſo graciouſly ſupplied the defects of reaſon, that the meaneſt underſtanding may know how to be happy: ſuch aſſiſtances of divine grace attend every chriſtian, if he will apply to God for it, as may enable him to direct his inclinations, govern his paſſions, and ſubdue his corrupt affections. Theſe talents of nature are in ſome degree common to all men; and by the improvements of that grace which is conferred on every one, all have ſufficient to conduct them through the ſeveral ſtages of life, if they will uſe but proper diligence and application. But regard muſt be had to all the means for cultivating thoſe gifts of nature and grace, ſuch as all opportunities of inſtruction, the miniſtry, and ordinances of religion, the reproofs and examples of good men, the occaſions offered, and the abilities given for the exerciſe of virtue. All theſe are talents, or gifts of God, depoſited with us, to be diligently made uſe of, and for which we are accountable to him. I ſhall therefore proceed to ſhew what duty is required from us, in the improvement of theſe talents. It is here ſuppoſed, that theſe talents are improvable, or otherwiſe they would be of no uſe or value; and indeed we are bound by the command of God to improve them, who has threatened to inflict ſevere penalties if we neglect it. And if they are not improved, they will not continue long with us, but be loſt: the fineſt parts and capacities, without proper culture, will make but a mean and contemptible figure. No knowledge can be preſerved without uſe and exerciſe, and the ſame holds with regard to moral accompliſhments. It requires great care and attention, to form a virtuous habit, and much more to preſerve it in its vigour. Unleſs we co-operate with the notions of God's grace, and cultivate it by uſe and application, its impreſſions will gradually wear out and be loſt; *The ſpirit of God will not always ſtrive with man.* He gives us a ſtock to manage equal to the ſervice he expects from us; but if we are ſlothful and negligent, and will not apply it to the purpoſes for which it was given, he will recal the uſeleſs gift. Take from him, ſays he, the talent, and give it to him that hath ten talents. Let us, therefore, diligently improve every talent committed to us, becauſe this will be required of in the day of accounts, and if not improved will be immediately taken from us; what this improvement implies, and how we may diſcharge this duty, is an enquiry of the neareſt concern to us. The proper improvement of all God's gifts is the employing them ſo as may beſt promote his glory. This is the end the Almighty has propoſed in our creation: in all the powers he has endued us with, and in all the aids of grace he has vouchſafed us. Whatever other improvements we make of them will not profit us, nor be admitted as any proof of our fidelity in the day of reckoning. We may cultivate our underſtanding by learning and ſtudy, and extend our knowledge through all the ſubjects of human enquiry; but if our end be only to gratify our curioſity or our vanity

vanity, we are not ſerving God but ourſelves: we may increaſe our portion of God's outward gifts, but if we only apply them to enlarge our own conveniencies, we are not making the improvements our maſter expects: we may take pleaſure in our knowledge and fortune, rejoice in them as our portion and inſtruments in our preſent ſatisfaction; but we muſt ſtill remember, that in our reckoning with God, all theſe improvements of our capacities and abilities will be added to our account. And the only uſe God will admit us to ſet in balance of our debt to him, is to employ them as means of increaſing and multiplying our virtues, or as inſtruments of exerciſing them in the works of piety and religion.

And we may learn from this parable, that the divine juſtice, in this ſcrutiny, will eſtimate and reward every one's fidelity in proportion to the improvements and returns they have made. An account will be demanded of every talent, nor will it be ſufficient that we have made ſome improvement, it muſt be proportional to the number and value of our gifts. Let us therefore live and act under a ſerious habitual regard to that day, when our great maſter ſhall come and reckon with us; remembering that ſuch as have been idle, and made no uſe of the talents given them by the Almighty, will *be caſt into outer darkneſs, there ſhall be weeping and gnaſhing of teeth.* A proſpect ſurely ſufficient to awaken ſuch from their ſlumber; quicken them to an immediate and vigorous application to duty; that by a double improvement of the time yet remaining, they may redeem what their indolence has loſt.

But far worſe, and more difficult to be retrieved is his caſe, who has ſquandered away the ſtock itſelf, ſuffered his gifts to periſh for want of uſe; or, by abuſing them to the ſervice of ſin, has provoked the Almighty to take them from him. How ſhall the prodigal recal the fortune he has ſpent, and appeaſe the anger of his judge? The terrors of the Lord may juſtly terrify him; but it ſhould not extinguiſh his endeavours in deſpair. He has loſt many excellent talents; but he who gave, can reſtore. Indeed the moſt circumſpect piety will, in the great day of accounts, want much to be forgiven; and muſt expect his reward from the mercy of his judge, not from the merit of his ſervice. Let us then do all in our power to bring forth fruits meet for repentance. For though the aweful day of the Lord may be at a great diſtance, yet the time allotted us to prepare for it, is limited by the ſhort ſpace of human life. The night of death cometh when no man can work. To-day, therefore, while it is called to-day, let us be diligent in the work of the Lord, correct our errors, finiſh what is imperfect, that we may obtain his approbation, and make our calling and election ſure.

Thus have I endeavoured to explain the parable of the talents, and ſhall now return to the third parable delivered at the ſame time by the bleſſed Jeſus, namely, that of the laſt judgment, *When the ſon of man*, ſaid he,

ſhall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then ſhall he ſit on the throne of his glory. And before him ſhall be gathered all nations, and he ſhall ſeparate them the one from the other, as a ſhepherd divideth his ſheep from the goats: and he ſhall ſet the ſheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left, Matt. xxv. 31. It is common in the Old Teſtament to compare good men to ſheep, on account of their innocence and uſefulneſs, and wicked men to goats, for their exorbitant luſts. Our bleſſed Saviour, however, does not purſue the allegory farther, but deſcribes the remaining, and indeed the greateſt part of this awful ſcene in terms perfectly ſimple; ſo that though the ſenſe be profound, it is obvious. Here the judgment of all nations, Gentiles as well as Chriſtians, is exhibited; and the particulars on which theſe awful trials are to proceed diſplayed by the great judge himſelf. Here we learn that we ſhall be condemned or acquitted, according as we have neglected or performed works of charity; works which flow from the great principles of faith and piety, and which the very heathens are, by the light of nature, invited to perform. But we muſt not underſtand, that ſuch works merited this favour from the judge: no, all who are acquitted at that day, whether heathens or Chriſtians, ſhall be acquitted ſolely on account of the righteouſneſs of Chriſt, the true, the only meritorious cauſe.

What a noble motive to perſeverance in well-doing, does the ſentence paſſed upon the righteous afford, *Come ye bleſſed children of my father inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.* Good men can at beſt but conſider their preſent ſtate as a baniſhment from their native country. A ſtate in which they are often expoſed to innumerable temptations, to perſecutions, to poverty, to reproach, to contempt. But the conſideration that they are travelling towards the heavenly Jeruſalem, a city prepared for them, when the foundations of the world were laid, will be abundantly ſufficient to ſupport their ſpirits, and render them *more than conquerors*. The glory laid up for them in the manſions of eternity, and which the great judge, will at the awful day of accounts, confer upon them, will animate them to bear the violence of their oppreſſors, and even defy the malice of men and devils. Nay, they will behold with contempt the flouriſhing proſperity of the wicked, and look forward to that glorious and immortal crown which will be given them by their great Redemer. Then ſhall the king ſay unto them on the right hand, *Come ye bleſſed children of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. I was an hungry and ye gave me meat: I was thirſty and ye gave me drink: I was a ſtranger and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was in priſon, and ye came unto me*, Matt. xxv. 34, &c.

Aſtoniſhed to hear the great judge declare, that all the good offices they have ever done to their brethren in affliction was done to him, they ask

with great reverence and humility, when they performed theſe ſervices? as they never ſaw him in want, and therefore could never aſſiſt him. *Lord, when ſaw we thee an hungry and fed thee? or thirſty and gave thee drink? when ſaw we thee a ſtranger, and we took thee in? or naked and clothed thee? or when ſaw we thee ſick and in priſon, and came unto thee? and the king ſhall anſwer and ſay unto them, Verily I ſay unto you, inaſmuch as ye have done it unto one of the leaſt of theſe my brethren, ye have done it unto me.* This is truly aſtoniſhing! The united wiſdom of men and angels could never have diſcovered a more proper method to convey an idea of the warmth and force of the divine benevolence to the ſons of men, or offer a more forcible motive to charity, than that the Son of God himſelf, ſhould, from his ſeat of judgment, in preſence of the whole race of mankind, and all the hoſts of bleſſed ſpirits from the courts of heaven, declare that all good offices done to the afflicted, are done to himſelf. During the time of his dwelling with human nature in this vale of tears, he ſuffered unſpeakable injuries and afflictions; and therefore he conſiders all the diſtreſſed virtuous, as members of his body, loves them with the utmoſt tenderneſs, and is ſo greatly intereſted in their welfare, that he rejoices when they are happy, and grieves when they are diſtreſſed.

It may perhaps ſeem ſtrange, that in this repreſentation of the laſt judgment, the enquiry ſhould ſolely turn on the performance of duties, without any regard to the commiſſion of crimes. Perhaps the true reaſon is, that men, generally ſpeaking, conſider the neglect of duties as a matter of no great conſequence, but dread the commiſſion of crimes. And hence it happens, that while they keep themſelves free from the latter, they eaſily find excuſes for the former And as there is not a more pernicious error with regard to religion and morality than this, the bleſſed Jeſus thought proper to give ſuch an account of the judgment, as ſhould prove the moſt ſolemn caution againſt it.

But as the enquiry turns wholly on the performance of duties, it has been asked why the offices of charity only are mentioned, and no notice taken of the duties of piety; though the judge himſelf upon another occaſion declared theſe to be of more importance than the duties of charity ſo highly applauded in this parable? But thoſe who ask this queſtion would do well to remember, that piety and charity cannot ſubſiſt ſeparately: piety, and its origin faith, always producing charity; and charity, wherever it ſubſiſts, neceſſarily preſuppoſing piety.

This connection between piety and charity will evidently appear if it be conſidered, that no man can be truly benevolent and merciful, without loving thoſe diſpoſitions. Conſequently, he muſt love benevolence in God, that is, he muſt love God; for piety, or the love of God, is nothing elſe but the regard we cheriſh towards God, on account of his per-

perfections. Piety and charity being thus eſſentially connected together, it was abundantly ſufficient to examine the conduct of men with regard to either of thoſe graces. In the parable, the enquiry is repreſented as turning upon the duties of charity, perhaps becauſe in this branch of goodneſs, there is leſs room for ſelf-deceit than in the other. It is common for hypocrites, by a pretended zeal in the externals of religion, to make ſpecious pretences to extraordinary piety, and at the ſame are totally deficient in charity; are covetous, unjuſt, rapacious, and proud, and conſequently deſtitute of all love for their Creator. But none can aſſume the appearance of charity, but by feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, relieving the diſtreſſed, and performing other benevolent offices to their brethren. The works of charity may indeed, in ſome particular caſes, flow from other principles than thoſe of a pious and benevolent diſpoſition, as from vanity or even views of intereſt; but then it ſhould be remembered that a common degree of hypocriſy will hardly engage men to undertake them: they are by far too weighty duties to be ſuſtained by thoſe falſe principles, and therefore are ſeldom counterfeited. Conſequently wherever a genuine extenſive and permanent charity is found, we may conclude that there the love of God reigns in perfection.

This parable, therefore, teaches us in the plaineſt manner, that however loud pretenſions we may make to piety, they will ſtand us in no ſtead at the aweful tribunal of the Son of God, if we are deficient in works of charity. At the ſame time, if we conſider it in its full light, it will give us no reaſon to hope well of ourſelves, if we are wanting in our duty to God; and that we ſhould not only be charitable but grateful alſo, juſt, temperate, and blameleſs in all our dealings with mankind. For we ſhould remember, that the duty we owe to the Almighty is no other than what is due to men in the like circumſtances, and which it would be unjuſt in us to neglect. It conſiſts in diſpoſitions and actions, the ſame in kind, but different in degree, proportionate to the perfection of the object. He who loves and admires holineſs, juſtice, and truth in men, cannot but love theſe perfections in God, that is, he muſt love God; ſo likewiſe, he that is truly grateful to an earthly benefactor, cannot be ungrateful to one from whoſe bounty he receives all the good things he enjoys: and ſince ingratitude in men is nothing more than forgetting the benefit received, and the benefactor who conferred the favour; how can we acquit ourſelves from the charge ingratitude to God, if we forget the obligations we lie under to him, and are at no pains to return him thanks; that is, if we wholly neglect the external and internal exerciſes of devotion. Since therefore the duty we owe to God is the ſame in kind with that we owe to man in like circumſtances, it will undeniably follow, that true morality can never exiſt where piety is wanting; and that for a

perſon to pretend to morality who is deſtitute of piety renders himſelf ridiculous.

Having thus endeavoured to ſhew that juſtice and piety cannot ſubſiſt ſeparately from each other, I ſhall now return to the remaining part of the parable, which exhibits a ſcene enough to terrify the moſt hardened ſinner. The awful judge himſelf has told us, that after he has paſſed the happy ſentence on the righteous, he will pronounce the following ſentence of condemnation upon the wicked: *Depart from me, ye curſed, into everlaſting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was an hungred and ye gave me no meat: I was thirſty and ye gave me no drink: I was a ſtranger and ye took me not in: Naked and ye clothed me not: Sick and in priſon, and ye viſited me not. Then ſhall they alſo anſwer him ſaying, Lord, when ſaw we thee an hungred or a thirſt, or a ſtranger or naked, or ſick or in priſon, and did not miniſter unto thee? Then ſhall he anſwer them, ſaying verily, I ſay unto you inaſmuch as ye did it not unto one of the leaſt of theſe, ye did it not to me,* Matt. xxv. 41, *&c.*

It is remarkable, that our bleſſed Saviour has told us, that the fire of hell was not prepared for the wicked but for the devil and his angels; but that the kingdom of heaven was prepared for the righteous. Perhaps he intended to teach us, that the original deſign of Omnipotence was to render man happy, not miſerable: a ſtate of conſummate felicity was formed for the human race, at the time they were created; but the fire of hell was prepared for the devil and his angels immediately after their fall. And as wicked men join with devils in their ſin of rebellion againſt the Almighty, they are doomed to ſhare with them in their puniſhment: a puniſhment of the heavieſt kind, a puniſhment of devils.

After having repreſented the ſentences that are to be paſſed on the righteous and the wicked, our Saviour cloſed the parable in the following manner: *And theſe ſhall go away into everlaſting puniſhment: but the righteous into life eternal.*

An expreſſion ſhort indeed, but awful beyond expreſſion! And were it fully underſtood, it muſt ſurely make an impreſſion on the moſt hardened ſinner. It indicates that everlaſting puniſhment, or life eternal, muſt be the lot of every individual of the human race; and when the ſentence is paſſed, the ſcene is cloſed for ever.

CHAP. XXXI.

Jeſus is anointed the third time. The council agree with Judas to betray his maſter. Peter and John ſent to prepare the paſſover. Jeſus waſhes his diſciples feet; and openly declares, that Judas will betray him.

IT was the cuſtom of our bleſſed Saviour to retire in the evening from the city to the mount of Olives, and there ſpend the night, either in ſome village or the gardens, in order to avoid falling into the hands of his enemies. They did not indeed preſume to attack him, while he was ſur-

ſurrounded by his followers in the day time; but in all probability, had he lodged within the city, they would have apprehended him during the darkneſs and ſilence of the night.

When our bleſſed Saviour had finiſhed theſe parables, he added a ſhort account of his own death, in order to fortify the diſciples againſt the greateſt trial they had yet met with; namely, the ſufferings of their Maſter. *And it came to paſs, when Jeſus had finiſhed all theſe ſayings, he ſaid unto his diſciples, Ye know that after two days is the feaſt of the paſſover, and the ſon of man is betrayed to be crucified. Then aſſembled together the chief prieſts, and the ſcribes, and the elders of the people, to the palace of the high prieſt, who was called Caiaphas, and conſulted that they might take Jeſus by ſubtilty, and kill him. But they ſaid not on the feaſt day, leſt there be an uproar among the people*, Matt. xxvi. 1, *&c.*

When the evening approached, our bleſſed Saviour, with his diſciples, repaired to Bethany, and entered the houſe of Simon the leper, probably one who had experienced the healing efficacy of his power. But while he ſat at meat, a woman, who had alſo doubtleſs been an object of his mercy, poured a box of precious ointment upon his head. This action diſpleaſed the diſciples, who knew that their Maſter was not delighted with luxuries of any kind; and therefore they rebuked the woman, imagining that it would have been more acceptable to the Son of God, if the ointment had been ſold, and the money diſtributed among the ſons and daughters of poverty and affliction.

But their benevolent Maſter ſaid, that it had pleaſed the divine Providence to order, that there ſhould always be perſons in neceſſitous circumſtances, that the virtuous might never want occaſions for exerciſing their charity; but that thoſe who did not now teſtify their love to him would never more have an opportunity of doing it, as the time of his miniſtry was near its period, when the king of terrors ſhould enjoy a ſhort triumph over his body; and therefore this woman had ſeaſonably anointed him for his burial. And to make them ſenſible of their folly, in blaming the woman for this her expreſſion of love to him, he aſſured them, that ſhe ſhould be highly celebrated for this action in every part of the world, and her memory live to the lateſt periods of time.

Judas Iſcariot, one of the twelve, having been more forward than the reſt, in condemning the woman, thought the rebuke was peculiarly directed to him. Stung with the guilt of his own conſcience, he roſe from table, went immediately into the city, to the high-prieſt's palace, where he found the whole council aſſembled. His paſſion would not ſuffer him to reflect on the horrid deed he was going to commit; he immediately promiſed, for the reward of thirty ſhekels of ſilver, to betray into their hands his Lord and Maſter.

Having thus engaged, with the rulers of Iſrael, to put into their

hands, a perſon who had been long labouring for their ſalvation, who had often invited them, in the moſt pathetic manner, to embrace the benevolent terms of the goſpel offered by the Almighty, he ſought an opportunity to betray him, in the abſence of the multitude. Ye monſters in the human form, how could you plot ſo deteſtible a crime! Surely you have forgot how mercy, with her charming voice, ſpake in all he uttered! How did benevolence pour her choiceſt ſtores in all his actions! Ye rulers of Iſrael, did ever compaſſion look ſo amiably ſoft, as in thoſe melting tears, which ſwelled his eyes and poured down his cheeks, to ſoften your hard and ſtony hearts? Was it poſſible for patience to aſſume a form ſo lovely, as that ſweetly-winning conduct, that endured the *contradiction of ſinners*; which intreated the obſtinate to be reconciled, and beſought the guilty not to die?

While the apoſtate Judas was thus bargaining with the chief prieſts and elders, to betray his maſter, the benevolent Jeſus was preparing to celebrate the paſſover, before he ſuffered, with his diſciples. He was now going to finiſh the mighty work for which he came into the world; and therefore would not neglect to fulfil the ſmalleſt particular of the law of Moſes. He therefore ſent two of his diſciples into the city, to prepare a lamb and make it ready, for eating the paſſover; telling them that they ſhould meet a man, bearing a pitcher of water, who would conduct them to his houſe, and ſhew them a large upper room furniſhed, where they were to make ready for him. He was willing, in this laſt tranſaction, to convince his diſciples, that he knew every thing that ſhould befal him; that his ſufferings were all predetermined by the Almighty; and that they were all, on his own account, ſubmitted unto voluntarily.

When night approached, Jeſus left Bethany; and every thing being ready for him, at the time he entered into the city, he ſat down at the appointed hour. But knowing that his ſufferings was now near, he told his diſciples, in the moſt affectionate manner, that he had greatly longed to eat the paſſover with them before he ſuffered, in order to ſhew them the ſtrongeſt proofs of his love. Theſe proofs were to give them a pattern of humility and charity, by waſhing their feet; inſtructing them in the nature of his death, as a propitiatory ſacrifice; inſtituting the ſacrament in commemoration of his ſufferings; comforting them by the tender diſcourſes recorded John xiv. xv. xvi. in which he gave them a variety of excellent directions, together with many gracious promiſes; and recommending them to the kind protection of his heavenly father. *With deſire, I have deſired to eat this paſſover with you before I ſuffer. For I ſay unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.*

Having thus ſpoken, he aroſe from the table, laid aſide his garment like a ſervant, and with all the circumſtances of an humble miniſter waſhed

the feet of his diſciples without diſtinction, though one of them, Judas Iſcariot, was a monſter of impiety, that they might at once behold a conjunction of charity and humility, of ſelf-denial and indifference, repreſented by a perſon glorious beyond expreſſion, their great Lord and Maſter. He choſe to waſh their feet rather than their head, that he might have an opportunity of diſplaying a more humble poſture, and a more ſtriking inſtance of his charity. The omnipotent Son of the Father lays every thing aſide, that he may ſerve his followers; heaven ſtoops to earth, one abyſs calls upon another; and the miſeries of man, which were almoſt infinite, are exceeded by a mercy equal to the immenſity of the Almighty. He deferred this ceremony, which was a cuſtomary civility paid to honourable ſtrangers at the beginning of their feaſt, that it might be preparatory to the ſecond, which he intended ſhould be a feaſt to the whole world, when all the followers of the bleſſed Jeſus ſhould have an opportunity, in a ſpiritual manner, of feeding on his fleſh, and drinking his blood.

When our bleſſed Saviour came to Peter, he modeſtly declined it; but his maſter told him, that if he refuſed to ſubmit implicitely to all his orders, he could have no part with him. On which Peter cried out, *Lord, not my feet only, but alſo my hands and my head.* But Jeſus told him, that the perſon who had bathed himſelf had no reaſon to waſh any part of his body except his feet, which he might have dirtied, by walking from the bath. In order to teach us, that perſons converted do not ſtand in need of a total change of mind, but only to cleanſe themſelves from the particular ſins they conſtantly commit through infirmity; for it is abundantly evident that our bleſſed Saviour ſpake of a ſpiritual waſhing, becauſe he added, *ye are clean, but not all.* Ye are men of virtuous and holy diſpoſitions; but not all: I well know that one of you will betray me.

When our bleſſed Saviour had finiſhed this menial ſervice, he aſked his diſciples, if they knew the meaning of what he had done, as the action was purely emblematical? You truly, added he, ſtile me Maſter and Lord, for I am the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world. But if I, your Maſter and your Lord, have condeſcended to waſh your feet, you ſurely ought to perform, with the utmoſt pleaſure, the humbleſt offices of charity to one another. I have ſet you a pattern of humility, and I recommend it to you.

And certainly nothing can more effectually ſhew us the neceſſity of this heavenly temper of mind than its being recommended to us by ſo great an example: a recommendation which, in the preſent circumſtances, was particularly ſeaſonable; for the diſciples having heard their great Maſter declare, that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, their minds were filled with ambitious thoughts. And therefore our bleſſed Saviour added, Ye need not be aſhamed to follow my example in

this particular; for no ſervant can think it beneath him, to condeſcend to perform thoſe actions his Lord has done before him. And, therefore, if he knows his duty, he will be happy if he practiſes it. Our bleſſed Saviour added, that though he had called them all to the apoſtleſhip, and well knew the ſecret diſpoſitions of every heart, before he choſe them, they need not be ſurpriſed, that one among them ſhould prove a traitor, as it was done that the ſcripture might be fulfilled. He that eateth bread with me hath lift up his heel againſt me.

As our bleſſed Saviour was now to be but a ſhort time with his diſciples, he thought proper to take his farewel of them, which he did in the moſt affectionate manner. Theſe melancholy tidings greatly troubled them. They were very unwilling to part with ſo kind a friend, ſo dear a maſter, ſo wiſe a guide, and ſo profitable a teacher; eſpecially as they thought they ſhould be left in a forlorn condition, a poor and helpleſs prey to the rage and hatred of a blind and malicious generation. They ſeemed willing to die with their Lord, if that might be accepted. Why cannot I follow thee? I will lay down my life for thee, was the language of one, and even all of them; but they could not ſupport the thoughts of a diſconſolate ſeparation.

Their great and compaſſionate maſter ſeeing them thus dejected, endeavoured to cheer their drooping ſpirits. *Let not your hearts be troubled.* Liſten attentively to what I am going to deliver for your conſolation. *I am going to prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myſelf, that where I am, there you may be alſo*; a reviving admonition! They were one day to meet again their dear, their affectionate maſter, in a place where they ſhould live together to all eternity. But death makes ſo vaſt a diſtance between friends, and the diſciples then knew ſo little of a future ſtate, that they ſeemed to doubt, whether they ſhould ever after their parting, meet their great Redeemer. They neither knew the place, where he was going, nor the way that led to his kingdom. *Lord*, ſaid they, *as we know not whither thou goeſt; how can we know the way?* In anſwer to this queſtion, he told them, that he was *the way, the truth, and the light*; as if he had ſaid, the only way of following me to the regions of happineſs, is by duly obſerving my doctrines and precepts which I have delivered to you from the Almighty. He added, that by his removing to heaven, he would there intercede for them with his heavenly father, and ſend from thence the Holy Ghoſt to comfort them.

But leſt all theſe arguments ſhould not be ſufficient to quiet their minds, he had ſtill another, which could not fail of ſucceſs; *If ye love me*, ſays he, *ye will rejoice, becauſe I ſaid I go to the father*: intimating, that he would conſider it as a proof of their love to him, if they ceaſed to mourn. They doubtleſs thought, that by grieving for his death, they expreſſed their love to their maſter; and

and it ſhould ſeem ſtrange that our Saviour ſhould put ſo contrary an interpretation on their friendly ſorrow, or require ſo unnatural a thing of them, as to rejoice at his departure. What! (might they think) ſhall we rejoice at ſo amiable a friend's removal from us; or can we be glad, that he retires and leaves us in this vale of miſery? No, it is impoſſible; the human heart on ſo melancholy an occaſion has no diſpoſition to rejoice. Our bleſſed Saviour therefore adds this reaſon to ſolve the ſeeming paradox, becauſe he was going to the father; that is, he was going to aſcend to the right hand of infinite power, from whence he would ſend them all the aſſiſtance they could deſire. It muſt not however be ſuppoſed, that our Saviour meant by theſe words, that his diſciples ſhould not be concerned at his death, or that they could not love him unleſs they expreſſed a viſible joy on this occaſion. That would indeed have been an hard interpretation of their grief: he well knew their grief flowed from love; and that if their love had not been ſtrong, their ſorrow had been much leſs. Indeed, their maſter was fully convinced that love was the occaſion of their ſorrow; and therefore he uſed theſe arguments to mitigate it, and direct it in a proper courſe.

Nor did our Lord intend to intimate, that all ſorrow for ſo worthy a friend was unlawful, or an unbecoming expreſſion of their love; doubtleſs he was not diſpleaſed to ſee his diſciples ſo tenderly affected at his removal from them. He who ſhed tears at the grave of Lazarus, blended with ſighs and groans, cannot be thought to forbid them wholly at his own. He therefore did not chide his diſciples with angry reproaches, as though they had been intirely in the wrong, but gently reaſoned with them by kind perſuaſion, *Let not your hearts be troubled*, as rather pitying than condemning their ſorrow. Soon after Jeſus had ſpoken theſe things, his heart was greatly troubled, to think that one of his diſciples ſhould prove his enemy; he complained of it at the table, declaring that one of them ſhould betray him. This moving declaration greatly affected the diſciples; and they began every of them to ſay to their maſter, *Lord is it I?* But Jeſus giving them no deciſive anſwer, John, the beloved diſciple, whoſe ſweet diſpoſition and other amiable qualities, is perpetuated in the peculiar love his great maſter bore him, and was now reclining on his boſom, aſked him, who among the diſciples could be guilty of ſo deteſtible a crime? Jeſus told him that the perſon to whom he ſhould give the ſop, when he had dipped it, was he who ſhould betray him. Accordingly as ſoon as he had dipped the ſop in the diſh, he gave it to Judas Iſcariot, ſaying to him at the ſame time, *what thou doeſt do quickly.*

Judas received the ſop, without knowing any thing of what his maſter had told the beloved diſciple; nor did any of the diſciples, except St. John, entertain the leaſt ſuſpicion that Judas was the perſon who would betray their maſter.

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They were indeed ſo deeply affected with his declaration that one of them ſhould betray him, that they did not remark the words of Jeſus to his apoſtate diſciple; but continued to aſk him, who was the perſon that ſhould be guilty of ſo unnatural a crime? Willing at laſt to ſatisfy their importunity, the bleſſed Jeſus declared, that the perſon who dipped his hand with him in the diſh ſhould betray him. This to the eleven was a joyful declaration, but confounding in the higheſt degree to Judas. Impudent as he was, it ſtruck him ſpeechleſs, pointing him out plainly, and diſplaying the foulneſs of his heart.

While Judas continued mute with confuſion, the bleſſed Jeſus declared that his death ſhould be brought about according to the decrees of heaven, though that would not, in the leaſt mitigate the crime of the perſon who betrayed him; adding, *it had been good for that man if he had not been born.* Judas having now recovered himſelf a little, aſſerted his innocence by a queſtion which implied a negation of the charge. But his maſter ſoon ſilenced him, by poſitively affirming that he really was the perſon.

The treachery of Judas Iſcariot in betraying his maſter muſt raiſe the aſtoniſhment of every reader, who has any notion of the character of our great, our merciful Redeemer. It will not therefore I hope be diſagreeable to the reader to explain the motives that induced him to be guilty of this atrocious crime, and conſider particularly the circumſtances that attended ſo inhuman an action.

Some are of opinion, that he was induced to commit this villany by the reſentment of the rebuke given him by his maſter for blaming the woman who came with the precious ointment, and anointed the head of Jeſus, as he ſat at meat in the houſe of Simon the leper. But though this had doubtleſs its weight with the traitor; yet it could not, I think, be his only motive; becauſe the rebuke was given in general to all the diſciples, who had perhaps, been equally forward with him in cenſuring the woman. Nor can we imagine, even if he had been rebuked alone, that ſo mild a reproof could provoke any perſon, however wicked, to the horrid act of murdering his friend, much leſs Judas, whoſe covetous diſpoſition muſt have diſpoſed him to bear every thing from his maſter, from whom he expected the higheſt preferment when he openly declared himſelf the Meſſiah, and took the reins of government into his own hands. If it ſhould be anſwered, that his reſentment was ſo great as to hinder him from exerciſing his reaſon, I deſire it may be remembered, that though he actually agreed with the chief prieſts a few hours after the rebuke was given, yet he did not commit the heinous crime till two days after. Beſides, to impute his treachery to the ſudden impulſes of a ſtrong reſentment, is ſo great an alleviation of his crime as ſeems abſolutely inconſiſtent with the character given of it in the ſcripture, where it is repreſented in the blackeſt colours,

colours, and ſaid to merit the heavieſt puniſhment.

Others think that Judas betrayed his maſter through covetouſneſs. But if we underſtand by covetouſneſs the reward given by the prieſts, this opinion is equally defective; for the ſum was too ſmall for the moſt covetous wretch to think equivalent to the life of a friend, eſpecially when he expected from him the higheſt poſts and advantages. The reader will be convinced of the force of this remark, when he remembers that all the diſciples believed the Meſſiah's kingdom was inſtantly to be erected; and that, according to the notion they entertained of it, each of them, eſpecially the Apoſtles, expected, in a very ſhort time, to be poſſeſſed of immenſe riches. Beſides, the ſcripture tells us, that the predominant paſſion of Judas was covetouſneſs: he therefore could not be ſo inconſiſtent with himſelf, as when juſt on the point of receiving an immenſe reward for his ſervice, to exchange every thing for ſo trifling a ſum.

Others attribute the perfidy of Judas to his doubting whether his maſter was the Meſſiah; and that he betrayed him in a fit of deſpair. But of all the ſolutions this is the worſt founded. For if Judas believed his maſter to be an impoſture, he muſt have obſerved ſomething in his behaviour which led him to form ſuch an opinion of him; and in that caſe, he would doubtleſs have mentioned it to the chief prieſts and elders, when he made the contract with them; which it is plain he did not, as they would have reminded him of it, when he came back and expreſſed his remorſe for what he had done. It ſhould alſo be obſerved, that had Judas given them any intimations of this kind, they would doubtleſs have urged them againſt our bleſſed Saviour himſelf in the courſe of his trial, when they were at ſo great a loſs for witneſſes to ſupport their accuſations; and againſt the apoſtles afterwards, when they reproved them for ſpeaking in the name of Jeſus. Beſides, had Judas thought his maſter an impoſture, and propoſed nothing by his treachery but the price he put upon his life, how came he to ſell him for ſuch a trifle, when he well knew that the chief prieſts and rulers would have given him any ſum, rather than not have gotten him into their hands? In fine, the ſuppoſition that Judas believed his maſter to be an impoſtor is directly confuted by the ſolemn declaration he made to the prieſts, when he declared the deepeſt conviction of the innocence of our great Redeemer. *I have ſinned*, ſaid he, *in betraying the innocent blood.* And it muſt be remembered, that the remorſe he felt for his crime, when he ſaw his maſter condemned, was too bitter to be endured; ſo that he fled even to the king of terrors for relief.

But ſince the treachery of Judas did not proceed from any of theſe motives, it may be aſked, what other motive can be aſſigned for his conduct? The Evangeliſt St. John tells us, that he was of ſo covetous a diſpoſition, as to ſteal money out of our Lord's bag; and hence

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we have ſufficient reaſon to believe, that he firſt followed Jeſus, with a view of obtaining riches and other temporal advantages, which he expected the Meſſiah's friends would enjoy; it likewiſe authorizes us to think, that as he had hitherto reaped none of theſe advantages, he might grow impatient under the delay; and the rather, as Jeſus had lately diſcouraged all ambitious views among his diſciples, and neglected to embrace the opportunity of erecting his kingdom, which was offered him by the multitude who accompanied him into Jeruſalem, with ſhouts, and crying Hoſannah to the Son of David. His impatience, therefore, becoming exceſſive, inſpired him with the thought of delivering his maſter into the hands of the council, firmly perſuaded that he would then be obliged to aſſume the dignity of the Meſſiah, and conſequently able to reward his followers. For as this court was compoſed of the chief prieſts, elders and ſcribes, that is, the principal perſons of the ſacerdotal order, the repreſentatives of the great families, and the doctors of the law; the traitor did not doubt that his maſter, when brought before ſo auguſt an aſſembly, would aſſert his pretenſions to the title of Meſſiah, prove his claim to their full conviction, gain them over to his intereſt, and immediately enter on his regal dignity. And though he muſt be ſenſible that the meaſures he took to compaſs this intention were very offenſive to his Maſter, yet he might think the ſucceſs of it would procure his pardon from ſo compaſſionate a maſter, and even recommend him to favour. In the mean time his project, however plauſible it might appear to one of his turn, was far from being free from difficulty: and therefore, while he revolved it in his own mind, many things might occur to ſtagger his reſolution. At length, thinking himſelf affronted by the rebuke of Jeſus, at the time when the woman anointed the head of his Maſter, he was provoked to execute the reſolution he had formed of obliging him to alter his meaſures. Riſing, therefore, directly from the table, he went immediately into the city, to the palace of the high prieſt, where he found the council aſſembled, conſulting how they might take Jeſus by ſubtilty, in the abſence of the multitude. To them he made known his intention of delivering his maſter into their hands; and undertook, for a ſmall ſum of money, to conduct a band of armed men to the place where the Saviour of the world uſually ſpent the night with his diſciples, where they might apprehend him without the leaſt danger of a tumult. Thus the great deceiver of mankind, by laying hold of the various paſſions which now agitated the traitor's breaſt, tempted him to commit the horrid action.

That theſe were really the motives which induced Judas to betray his Maſter, may be gathered—*Firſt*, From the nature of the contract, *What will ye give me*, ſaid he, *and I will deliver him unto you?* He did not mean that he would deliver him up to

to be put-to death; for though the priests had consulted among themselves, how they might destroy Jesus, they had not been so abominably wicked as to declare their intention publicly: they only proposed to bring him to a trial for assuming the character of the Messiah, and to treat him as it should appear he deserved. The offer, therefore, which Judas made them of delivering him up was in conformity to their public resolutions. Nor did they understand it in any other light: for, had the priests thought that his design in this was to get his Master punished with death, they must also have thought he believed him to be an impostor; in which case they would doubtless have produced him as one of their principal evidences, no person being more proper to bear witness against any criminal than his companion. Or, supposing Judas repented before the trial came on, and had withdrawn himself, the priests might have argued with great plausibility, both in their own court and before the governor, that for a man's disciple to require the judges to bring him to condign punishment, branded him with such a suspicion of guilt as was almost equal to a full proof. Also, when Judas returned to them with the money, declaring that he had sinned in betraying the innocent blood, instead of replying, *What is that to us, see thou to that?* it was the most natural thing in the world to have upbraided him with the stain he had put upon his Master's character, by the contract they had made with him. It is true they called the money they gave him, *the price of blood:* but they did not mean this in the strictest sense, as they had neither hired Judas to assassinate his Master, nor can they be supposed to have charged themselves with the guilt of murdering him. It was only the price of blood, consequently being the reward they had given to the traitor, for putting it in their power to take away the life of Christ, under the colour and form of public justice. Nay, it may be even doubted, whether Judas asked the money, as a reward of his service. He covetously, indeed, kept it; and the priests, for that reason, called it the price of blood. But he demanded it, perhaps, on pretence of gratifying and encouraging the people, who were to assist him in apprehending Jesus.

In short, Judas knew that the rulers could not take away the life of any person whatsoever, the Romans having deprived them of that power; and therefore could have no design of this kind in delivering him up: not to mention that it was a common opinion among the Jews that the Messiah could never die: an opinion which Judas might easily embrace, having seen his master raise several persons, and among the rest one who had been in the grave no less than four days.

2. That the traitor's intention in betraying his master was that mentioned above, is probable from his hanging himself, when he found him condemned, not by the governor, but by the council, whose prerogative it was to judge prophets. Had

Judas propoſed to take away the life of his maſter, the ſentence of condemnation paſſed upon him, inſtead of filling him with deſpair, muſt have gratified him, being the accompliſhment of his project: whereas the light wherein I have endeavoured to place his conduct ſhews this circumſtance to have been perfectly natural.

Judas having been witneſs to the greateſt part of our Lord's miracles, and having experienced the certain truth of them, in the powers that had been conferred upon himſelf, could never think that the council would have condemned him as an impoſtor, far leſs as a blaſphemer. He knew him to be perfectly innocent; and expected that he would have wrought ſuch miracles before the council as ſhould have conſtrained them to believe. Therefore, when he found that nothing of this kind was done, and that the prieſts had paſſed the ſentence of condemnation upon him, and were carrying him to the governor to get it executed, he repented of his raſh and covetous project, came to the chief prieſts and elders, the perſons to whom he had betrayed him, offered them their money again, and ſolemnly declared the deepeſt conviction of his Maſter's innocence, hoping that they would have deſiſted from the proſecution. But they were obſtinate, and would not relent: upon which his remorſe aroſe to ſuch a pitch, that, unable to ſupport the torments of his conſcience, he went and hanged himſelf. Thus I think it probable, that the traitor's intention in delivering up his Maſter was not to get him puniſhed with death, but only to lay him under a neceſſity of proving his pretenſions before the grandees, whom he had hitherto ſhunned; thinking that if they had yielded the whole nation would immediately have ſubmitted, and the diſciples have been raiſed forthwith to the ſummit of their expectations.

This account of Judas's conduct is by no means calculated to leſſen the foulneſs of his crime, which was the blackeſt imaginable. For even in the light above-mentioned, it implied both an inſatiable avarice, and a wilful oppoſition to the counſels of Providence, and rendered the actor of it a diſgrace to human nature. But it is calculated to ſet the credibility of the traitor's action in a proper light, and to ſhew that he was not moved to it by any thing ſuſpicious in the character of his Maſter; becauſe, according to this view of it, his perfidy, inſtead of implying that he entertained ſuſpicions of his Maſter's integrity, plainly proves that he had the fulleſt conviction of his being the Meſſiah. And to ſay the truth, it was not poſſible for any one, intimately acquainted with our Lord, as Judas was, to judge otherwiſe of him; having ſeen his miracles, which were great and true, beyond exception, and having experienced his power, in the ability of working miracles, which, together with the reſt of the apoſtles, he had received from him, and no doubt exerciſed with extraordinary pleaſure.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXXII.

Our Saviour inſtitutes the ſacrament of his ſupper. Adjuſts the contention among his diſciples. Foretels Peter's denying him; delivers a conſolatory diſcourſe. Foretels Peter's timidity a ſecond time. Preaches and prays with his diſciples before his death. His paſſion in the garden.

THE ſpirit of our Saviour was not the leaſt ſoured from the conſideration of the treachery of Judas; for, in order to render his love to mankind more effectual, he inſtituted the ſacrament of his ſupper, to perpetuate the memory of it throughout all ages. Accordingly, as they were eating the paſchal-ſupper, *Jeſus took bread, and bleſſed it, and brake it, and gave it to his diſciples and ſaid take eat: This is my body, which is given for you, this do in remembrance of me.* Obſerve this rite no longer in remembrance of your deliverance from Egypt, but in remembrance of me; who, by dying for you, will bring you out of the ſpiritual bondage, a bondage far worſe than the Egyptian, under which your fathers groaned, and will eſtabliſh you in the glorious liberty of the children of God. Do it in remembrance of me, who, by laying down my life will ranſom you from ſin, from death, from hell, and will ſet open the gates of heaven to you, that you may enter immortality in triumph.

Having given the bread to his diſciples, he alſo took the cup, and gave it to them, ſaying, *Drink ye all of it, for this is my blood of the New Teſtament, which is ſhed for many for the remiſſion of ſins.* All of you, and all of my diſciples in all ages muſt drink of this cup, becauſe it repreſents my blood ſhed for the remiſſion of the ſins of mankind; my blood by which the new covenant between God and man is ratified. It is therefore my blood of the new covenant; ſo that this inſtitution exhibits to your joyful meditation the grand baſis of the hopes of the children of men, and perpetuates the memory of it to the end of the world. He added, that he *would not drink henceforth of the fruit of the vine, until that day when he ſhould drink it new with them in his father's kingdom.*

The manifeſtation of the ſon of God is the moſt illuſtrious, the moſt momentous event that is poſſible to engage the meditations of mankind. To his life and death, his reſurrection and aſcenſion into glory, we are indebted for our hopes and aſſurances of pardon, for our peace, for our happineſs. To procure our benefit, he made the moſt amazing condeſcenſion from the dignity he enjoyed with his father, by putting on the veil of fleſh: he poured divine inſtruction from his lips, and ſhone forth with an all-perfect, and all-lovely example. For our benefit he ſubmitted to a courſe of the moſt cruel treatment of his bitter enemies, to the agonies of the croſs, and to the ſtroke of the king of terrors. For our benefit he aroſe again with power and luſtre, aſcended into the manſions of eternal happineſs, ma-

nages our affairs with the Almighty, and holdeth the reins of government. And ſhall the amiable, the excellent, the beneficial actions of this Saviour be buried in oblivion? Forbid it gratitude, duty, intereſt! Forbid it every conſideration that can affect the human mind! With the greateſt wiſdom and goodneſs this beneficent Jeſus inſtituted a rite, that ſhould recal his love to our memories, and awake each pious paſſion in our breaſts; a rite which, by the breaking of bread, and the pouring out of wine, ſhould repreſent to us in a ſtriking manner that moſt ſignal proof of the affection both of him and his heavenly father, when his tender frame was expoſed to wounds and bruiſes, when ſtreams of the moſt precious blood iſſued from his ſacred veins.

The more we reflect on this inſtance of divine love, the more we ſhall perceive that there was a peculiar propriety in pointing out, by a particular ordinance, a fact of ſuch immenſe importance in the ſcheme of revelation! Nay, we may even venture to aſſert, that in ſome dark and corrupt ages, when the ſcriptures were little known by the common people, and hardly ſtudied by the prieſts, the death of our Saviour would have been almoſt forgotten, had not the remembrance of it been renewed by the celebration of this ſacred ordinance.

It ſhould alſo be remembered, that the vanities of the world, the allurements of ſenſual pleaſure, the charms of ambition, the ſplendor of riches; in ſhort, temptations from preſent objects of every kind, have often too fatal an influence on our temper and conduct. They have a melancholy aptitude to draw the ſoul aſide to folly, and to obliterate the impreſſions of things divine. It was therefore a wiſe, a kind intention of our great Redeemer, by a frequent repetition of the ſacramental feaſt, to call back the wandering heart of man to a ſenſe of his duty and obligations as a chriſtian.

Beſides, tho' the religion of the immaculate Jeſus is altogether gentle, generous, and beneficent; though its whole tendency is to correct the paſſions, ſweeten the diſpoſitions, and enlarge the affections of men, and though it enforces all this upon us by motives ſurpriſingly powerful and affecting; yet ſuch is the perverſeneſs of the human heart, that jealouſies and contentions, envy, wrath, and malice too often find admittance there. Was it not then an inſtance of our Saviour's wiſdom and benevolence, by uniting us together at the ſacrament of his body and blood, to urge the putting away all bitterneſs, anger, evil-ſpeaking, and revenge, and to inſpire us with condeſcenſion, compaſſion, and love?

How careful therefore ought we to be in performing this duty appointed by our dying Saviour? We ſhould, in order to receive it worthily, employ our meditation on the deſign and excellency of the goſpel; on the noble ſyſtem of doctrines and duties it contains; on the illuſtrious, divine, and complete example of the bleſſed Jeſus; on the important privileges, the valuable promiſes, and

the raviſhing proſpects his revelation affords; and on the bright and convincing evidence with which it is attended. We ſhould contemplate that eſſential and unparalleled benevolence of the deity in forming the ſcheme of our redemption; on the readineſs manifeſted by the ſon of God in undertaking our cauſe; and on his wonderful tranſactions in the proſecution of this grand, this amazing work. Above all we ſhould impreſs upon our ſouls a ſtrong ſenſe of the ſpecial and immediate purpoſes for which this ſacrament was appointed.

When we actually join in communion, we ſhould be careful that our affections be properly directed, and warmly engaged. To have our hearts fixed upon the vanities, the profits, and the cares of this world, is a direct violation of the ordinance; and therefore we ſhould be extremely careful to maintain a right temper and behaviour at that time. We ſhould ſtudy to abſtract our thoughts as much as poſſible from every foreign, every terreſtrial conſideration, and to have our paſſions fervently employed in the ſolemn ſervice. "Retire, oh my ſoul, each of us "ſhould ſay, from this inferior "ſcene of things; from all its plea-"ſures and all its purſuits, and "hold communion with the Al-"mighty and his ſon, the immacu-"late Jeſus. Meditate upon that "infinite grace of omnipotence, "which contrived the amazing plan, "that diſplayeth pardon, peace, and "endleſs happineſs to ſo undeſerving "a creature as thou art. Recollect "that ſurpriſing condeſcenſion and "tenderneſs of thy compaſſionate "Redeemer which induced him to "bring down from heaven ſalva-"tion to the ſons of men. Call to "mind the admirable inſtructions he "offered, the charming pattern he "exhibited, the hard labours and "ſufferings he endured in the courſe "of his miniſtry; eſpecially call to "mind the ignominy, the reproaches, "the agonies he endured, when he "hung upon the croſs, and pur-"chaſed for thee, eternal mercy. "Think upon theſe affecting ſubjects, "till thine heart is filled with ſor-"row for thine iniquities; till thy "faith becomes lively, active and "fruitful; till thy gratitude and love "are elevated to the higheſt pitch; "till thy obedience is rendered uni-"form, ſteady, and complete. Haſt "thou, oh my God and parent of "univerſal nature, haſt thou ſo il-"luſtriouſly manifeſted thy com-"paſſion for ſinners as not to ſpare "thine own ſon? Haſt thou ſent the "Saviour into this lower world, in "order to raiſe the children of men "to immortality, perfection, and glo-"ry? And am I now in thy pre-"ſence, on purpoſe to celebrate this "inſtitution, which requireth me to "commemorate the death of the "great Meſſiah; to declare my pub-"lic acceptance of his excellent reve-"lation, and my regard to my chriſtian "brethren? May then the remem-"brance of his beneficence dwell upon "my mind, and upon my tongue for "ever and ever! May I conſider and "comply with the intention of his "goſpel; and may the ſentiments of kindneſs

"kindneſs and charity towards all my "fellow-mortals and fellow-diſci-"ples reign in my breaſt, with in-"creaſing purity, with increaſing "zeal!"

Such are the views that ſhould poſſeſs our ſouls, when we partake of this ſacred ordinance: but it will ſignify little to entertain theſe views at that time, unleſs the effects of them are apparent in our future conduct and converſation; for a tranſient flow of affections or ſallies of immediate delight were not principally intended in this inſtitution. The bleſſed Jeſus did not ordain it as a ceremony or charm, but as a proper method of eſtabliſhing our hearts in virtuous and pious diſpoſitions. Though ye have therefore, oh Chriſtians! obeyed the Redeemer's command in this appointment, and found your paſſions greatly moved, yet this is not the whole required at your hands: it will juſtly be expected, that ye ſhould live to the honour of your divine maſter. As you have ſolemnly profeſſed your faith in him, and your love towards him, the reality of your faith and love ſhould be demonſtrated by walking more ſtrictly in the way of his precepts, and by abounding in that heavenly character and temper which his ſpotleſs example ſo engagingly recommends. Thus only will the ſacrament become ſubſervient to the moſt beneficial purpoſes. Thus only will it be inſtrumental in qualifying us for ſharing in the dignity and felicity poſſeſſed by our exalted Saviour. May therefore all the followers of the immaculate Jeſus, by uniting together at his ſacred table, advance from holineſs to holineſs, till they arrive at the regions of eternal felicity!

Our bleſſed Saviour having thus inſtituted his laſt ſupper was deeply affected with his own thoughts; and after delivering the ſacramental cup, telling them that his blood was ſhed for them, he mentioned the treachery of Judas a ſecond time, *but behold the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me at the table.* This ſecond declaration was made very properly after the inſtitution of the ſacrament, which exhibits the higheſt inſtance of our great Redeemer's love to mankind, his dying to obtain the remiſſion of their ſins; for it abundantly proves, that the perſon who could deliberately be guiltly of ſuch an injury to ſo kind a friend muſt have been a monſter, the foulneſs of whoſe ingratitude cannot be reached by the force of language.

Some of the diſciples, particularly ſtruck with horror at the thought of Judas's treachery, rebuked him by aſking him with ſurprize, how he could betray his maſter? This accuſation Judas no doubt repelled by impudently denying the fact: but conſciouſneſs of guilt, giving edge to the reproaches of his brethren, and to every circumſtance of the affair, he immediately left the company exceedingly diſpleaſed at thinking himſelf inſulted and affronted.

The ſufferings of our bleſſed Saviour were now at hand. The traitor Judas was gone to the chief prieſts and elders, for a band of ſoldiers to apprehend him; but this did not

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diſcompoſe the Redeemer of mankind; he took occaſion to meditate on the glory that would accrue both to himſelf and to the Almighty from thoſe ſufferings, and ſpake of it to his diſciples. *Now*, ſaid he, *is the ſon of man glorified, and God is glorified in him.* He alſo told them, that, having already done honour to his father by the paſt actions of his life, and being about to honour him yet farther by his ſufferings and death, which would diſplay his perfections, particularly his infinite love to the human race, in the moſt aſtoniſhing and amiable light, he was in his turn to receive honour from the Almighty; intimating that his human nature was to be exalted to the right hand of Omnipotence; and that his miſſion from God was to be ſupported by irrefragable atteſtations. But his diſciples, imagining that he ſpake of the glory of a temporal kingdom, their ambition was again revived, and they began to diſpute with as much keenneſs as ever which of them ſhould be greateſt in that kingdom. This contention Jeſus compoſed by the arguments he had formerly uſed for the ſame purpoſe. Among the Gentiles, ſaid he, they are reckoned the greateſt who have the greateſt power, and have exerciſed it in the moſt abſolute manner: but your greatneſs ſhall be very different from theirs; it ſhall not conſiſt in being unlimited with regard to tyrannical power, even though it ſhould be joined with an affectation of titles, which denote qualities truly honourable; but whoſoever deſires to be great, or chief among you, let him be ſo by his humility, and the ſervice he renders to the reſt, in imitation of me, your Maſter, whoſe greatneſs conſiſts in this, that I am become the ſervant of you all. Adding, as they had continued with him in this temptation, he would beſtow upon them ſuch a kingdom as his father had appointed for him. At the ſame time, to check their ambition, and lead them to form a juſt notion of his kingdom, he told them, that he was ſoon to leave them, and that whither he was going, they could not at that time follow him; for which reaſon, inſtead of contending with one another, which of them ſhould be the greateſt, they would do well to be united among themſelves in the happy bond of love. For by loving one another ſincerely and fervently, they would prove themſelves his diſciples to the conviction of mankind, who could not be ignorant that love was a diſtinguiſhing part of his character.

He called this a new commandment, not becauſe mutual love had never been enjoined to mankind before, but becauſe it was a precept of peculiar excellency; for the word new in the Hebrew language denotes excellency and truth. And the reaſon of this idiom ſeems to have been, that novelty oftentimes has the ſame effect upon the mind with excellency, rendering an object acceptable, and raiſing admiration: he alſo called this a new commandment, becauſe they were to exerciſe it under a new relation, according to a new meaſure, and from new motives. They were to love one an-

another in the relation of his diſciples, and in that degree of love which he had ſhewed to them; for they were to lay down their lives for the brethren.

This excellent morality, however, did not make ſuch an impreſſion on Peter as the words which Jeſus had ſpoken concerning a place whither his diſciples could not come. He therefore replied, by aſking, where he was going? To which Jeſus anſwered, *Whither I go thou canſt not follow me now, but ſhall follow me afterward.*

Farther, to make his diſciples humble, watchful, and kindly affectioned one towards another, he aſſured them that Satan was ſeeking to ruin them all by his temptations. *And the Lord ſaid, Simon, Simon, Behold Satan hath deſired to have you, that he might ſift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted ſtrengthen thy brethren.* Peter was greatly offended that his maſter ſhould have ſingled him out as the weakeſt; for ſo he interpreted his praying for him particularly: and ſuppoſing that he mentioned Satan's ſeeking to ſift him, as the thing which would hinder him from following his maſter, replied, Why cannot I follow thee now? Is there any road more terrible than the dark valley of the ſhadow of death? Yet through theſe black and gloomy ſhades, I am willing this moment to accompany thee.

Jeſus knowing his weak, though ſincere reſolution, anſwered, Art thou ſo very confident of thine own ſtrength? I tell thee, that this very night before the cock crows, thou ſhalt thrice deny me to be thy Maſter.

Our bleſſed Saviour having finiſhed what he had to ſay to Peter in particular, turned himſelf to his other diſciples; and put them in mind how that when they were firſt ſent out, he directed them to rely wholly upon the Almighty for aſſiſtance. When I ſent you formerly, ſaid he, to preach the goſpel, you may remember I ordered you to go without any proviſion, either for your ſuſtenance or defence, aſſuring you, that, though you would indeed meet with great oppoſition, yet providence would diſpoſe ſome men in all places to be your friends, and to furniſh you with all neceſſaries; and accordingly you found that you wanted for nothing, but were wonderfully ſupported without any care or proviſion of your own in the whole journey, and finiſhed your work with ſucceſs. But now the caſe is very different: the time of that greateſt trial and diſtreſs whereof I have often forewarned you, is juſt at hand; and you may now make all the proviſion in your power, and arm yourſelves againſt it as much as you are able. The time, I ſay, of the greateſt trial and diſtreſs that ever yet befel you is now at hand; for I am juſt going to be betrayed into the hands of my inveterate enemies. I have finiſhed the work for which I was ſent into the world: and nothing now remains for me, but to undergo thoſe ſufferings which the prophets have foretold concerning me, and to complete

plete this whole diſpenſation of providence, by ſubmitting at laſt to a cruel and ignominious death.

The diſciples thinking that their great maſter meant that they ſhould arm themſelves in a literal ſenſe, and endeavour to oppoſe the aſſaults that would ſhortly be made upon them by the Jews, anſwered, *Lord here are two ſwords:* but the bleſſed Jeſus, who only intended to convey an idea of their approaching diſtreſs and temptations, and to arm them againſt the ſurprize, replied, *It is enough*; you need not trouble yourſelves about any more weapons of this nature for your defence.

The compaſſionate Redeemer of mankind having thus forewarned his diſciples of the great trial that was coming upon them, and commanded them to arm themſelves againſt it, proceeded to animate them to ſuſtain the trial manfully, and to comfort them under the diſmal apprehenſions it might cauſe in their minds.

Be not terrified and diſconſolate, ſaid the compaſſionate Jeſus, becauſe I have told you that I muſt undergo great ſufferings, and be taken away from you for a time. You have always been taught to believe in God, who is the Almighty Preſerver and Governor of all things; and to rely on him for deliverance in every affliction and diſtreſs. Learn now in like manner to believe in me, who have all power committed to me, as preſerver and head of my church; and truſt in me to accompliſh fully all things that I have promiſed you. If you do this, and perſiſt ſteadfaſtly in the belief of my doctrine, and in the obedience of my commands, nothing in this vale of miſery, not even perſecution, or death itſelf, ſhall be able to hinder you from attaining the happineſs I have propoſed to you. For in heaven, my Father's houſe, there is abundant room to receive you: otherwiſe I would not have filled your minds with the hopes and expectations of happineſs. But as there are manſions ſufficient for you in another ſtate, you may with confidence and aſſurance hope for the full accompliſhment of my promiſes, notwithſtanding all this preſent world may contrive or act againſt you. And ye ought alſo to bear patiently my departure from you at this time; ſince I only leave you to prepare a place, and open the portals of thoſe eternal habitations where I ſhall be ever with you.

When I have prepared a place for you in that eternal ſtate, I will again return and take you to myſelf. Nor ſhall you ever more be ſeparated from me, but continue with me to all eternity, in full participation of my eternal glory and happineſs, in the bliſsful regions of the heavenly Canaan. You muſt now ſurely know whither I am going, and the way that leads to theſe happy ſeats of immortality.

But the diſciples, whoſe minds were not yet fully weaned from the expectations of temporal power and glory, did not underſtand this diſcourſe of their great and beloved Maſter. Accordingly Thomas replied, Lord we cannot comprehend whither thou art going; and therefore muſt needs be ignorant of the way.

To which the bleſſed Jeſus anſwered, I myſelf, as I have often told you, am the true and only way to life. Imitating my example, and obeying my commands, is the way to arrive at the place whither I am going; namely to my father's houſe, and to the enjoyment of his eternal happineſs. Nor can any man go thither by any other way. If ye ſay ye do not know the father, I tell you, that no man who knoweth me, can be ignorant of my father, of his will, and the manner of pleaſing him; for my father and I are one: ſo that if ye know me, ye muſt know the father alſo. And indeed ye do know him, and have been ſufficiently inſtructed in his precepts.

Philip anſwered, Lord, ſhew us but once the father, and we ſhall be fully ſatisfied.

Jeſus replied, have I been ſo long continually with you, and doſt thou not yet know me, Philip? I tell you I and my father are the ſame; ſo that to know one is to be acquainted with both. What then can you mean by deſiring to ſee the father, as if you could ſtill be ignorant of him, after being ſo long acquainted with me? Do you not believe that the father and I are one and the ſame? Whatſoever I ſpeak is the declaration of his will, and whatſoever I do, is the operation of his power. Believe me, that the father and I are one. And if ye refuſe to believe my own affirmation, yet, at leaſt, let my works convince you; for they carry in them undeniable evidences of a divine power.

Surely then you have matter ſufficient to comfort and ſupport your ſpirits under the thoughts of my departure from you. Ye have abundant reaſon to believe, that I have power to perform all the promiſes I have made you; and the deſign of my departure is actually to perform them. When I am returned to my father, ye ſhall ſoon receive ſufficient pledges of my care and remembrance of you. Ye ſhall be endued with power not only to perform the ſame works ye have ſeen me do, as healing diſeaſes, giving ſight to the blind, caſting out devils, and the like, for the conviction of the Jews, but even to do greater things than thoſe; to ſpeak with all kinds of tongues, and to propagate my religion among the Gentiles, even through all the nations of the earth.

And whatſoever ye ſhall aſk of my father in my name, as being my diſciples, and in order to promote the work of the goſpel, ſhall certainly be granted you. That God may be greatly glorified, by the extraordinary ſucceſs and ſpreading the religion of his ſon, I ſay, that whatſoever ye ſhall ask, I will take care after my return to the father, that it ſhall be granted you. Only ye muſt remember, as the neceſſary condition upon which all depends, that ye be careful above all things to continue ſtedfaſt and immovable in your obedience to my commands: this is the only true mark ye can give of the ſincerity of your love towards me; it is more than your grieving at my departure, or any other external indication of zeal whatſoever.

The father, I ſay, ſhall ſend you another advocate and comforter, even his Holy Spirit, the author and teacher of truth, who ſhall guide and direct, aſſiſt and comfort you in all caſes. This ſpirit, the ſenſual and corrupt world cannot receive; having no knowledge of him, nor diſpoſition to be governed by him. But ye know him, and are diſpoſed to entertain him. He is already in you, by his ſecret and inviſible efficacy; and ſhall heareafter appear in you openly, by great and viſible manifeſtations of himſelf.

Thus, though I muſt depart from you, yet I do by no means leave you comfortleſs. I leave with you a promiſe of the Holy Spirit; and I leave you in expectation alſo of my own return. For though after a very little while, I ſhall appear no more to the world; yet to you I will appear again, for I ſhall live again, and ye alſo ſhall live with me.

When, therefore, I have conquered and triumphed over death, ye ſhall underſtand more fully, and it ſhall appear more viſibly by great and manifeſt effects, that I act in all things agreeably to my Father's will, and am perfectly inveſted with his power: and that ye in like manner have my power and commiſſion communicated to you; ſo that there is a perfect unity and communion between us. Only ye muſt remember that the one neceſſary condition, on which all depends, is, that ye continue ſtedfaſt and immovable in your faith in me, and in your obedience to my commands. He, and he only, who embraces my doctrine, and obeys and practiſes it, ſhall be judged to be ſincere in his love towards me. And he who loves me in that manner ſhall be loved by my Father; and I myſelf alſo will love him, and manifeſt myſelf to him.

Here Judas Thaddeus interrupted his maſter, ſaying, Lord, why wilt thou chooſe to manifeſt thyſelf to us, a few particular perſons; and not to the generality of the world?

Jeſus replied, I have already told you the reaſon for my acting in this manner; becauſe the generality of the world are not diſpoſed to obey my commandments, the neceſſary condition of maintaining communion with me. But ye are diſpoſed to embrace my doctrine, and to obey it; and therefore, I manifeſt myſelf to you. And whoever elſe will ſo love me as to keep my commandments, him alſo will I and my Father love, and will maintain communion with him, and all ſpiritual bleſſings ſhall be poured down upon him, and he ſhall be made partaker of happineſs and eternal life.

On the contrary, whoever loves me not, that is, obeys not my commandments, ſhall have no intercourſe or communion with me. Neither will my father love or honour him, or make any manifeſtations of himſelf to him; for as my commandments are not my own, but the father's commandments; therefore, whoever diſhonours me, my father will look upon him as diſhonouring himſelf.

Theſe things have I briefly ſpoken to you now, according to the ſhortneſs

neſs of the time I am to continue with you, and to comfort you for the preſent, againſt my departure. But when the comforter whom I promiſed you is come, even the Holy Spirit, whom my father ſhall ſend you on my account, he ſhall inſtruct you more fully, recalling to your remembrance what you have forgotten, explaining what is yet obſcure, and ſupplying what is further neceſſary to be taught you, and to be underſtood by you.

In the mean time I take my leave of you, and my bleſſing I leave with you; not formally, and after the common faſhion of the world, but affectionately and ſincerely; retaining a careful remembrance of you, and with an earneſt deſire and intention of returning again ſpeedily to you. Wherefore, be not overmuch grieved for me and my departure, nor fearful of what may then befal yourſelves. I go away from you; but it is with an intention, as I have already told you, to return to you again. If you loved me with a wiſe and underſtanding affection, ye would rejoice, inſtead of grieving at my preſent departure; becauſe I am going to my father, the ſupreme Author of all glory and happineſs.

Theſe things I have now told you before they come to paſs, that when ye ſee them happen, your faith in me, and your expectation of the performance of all my promiſes, may be confirmed and ſtrenthened; the time will not allow me to ſay much more to you at preſent; my end draweth near; the ruler of this world, the prince of the power of darkneſs, is at this inſtant employing all his wicked inſtruments to apprehend, and deſtroy me. Not that either the power of the devil, or the malice of man, can at all prevail over me; but becauſe the time of my ſuffering, according to the appointment of divine wiſdom, is arrived, and that I may demonſtrate to the world my love and obedience to my father; I willingly ſubmit myſelf to be put to death by the hands of ſinful and cruel men. Riſe up, let us be going, that I may enter on my ſufferings. See *John*, chap. xiv.

Having thus ſpoken, they finiſhed the paſſover, with ſinging a hymn, and went out to the mount of olives. The hymn which they ſung was probably that which the Jews call the *Hallem*, or great Hymn, which conſiſted of the hundred and thirteenth and five ſubſequent pſalms: part of which was ſung at the beginning, and part at the end of the ſolemnity.

On their arrival at the place which was to be the ſcene of his ſufferings, he deſired them to fortify themſelves by prayer, and forewarned them of the terrible effects his ſufferings would have upon them: they would make them all ſtumble that very night, agreeable to the prophecy of Zachariah: *I will ſmite the ſhepherd, and the ſheep of the flock ſhall be ſcattered abroad.* To ſtrengthen their faith, therefore, he not only mentioned his own reſurrection, but told them they ſhould ſee him in Galilee, after he was riſen from the dead.

On

On our bleſſed Saviour's mentioning the offence that his diſciples would take at his ſufferings, Peter recollected what had been ſaid to him in particular, before they left the houſe. Grieving therefore afreſh, to find his maſter entertain ſuch thoughts of him, and being now armed with a ſword, the vehemence of his temper urged him to boaſt a ſecond time of his couragious and cloſe attachment to his maſter. *Though all men*, ſaid he, *ſhould be offended becauſe of thee, yet I will never be offended.* But Jeſus, knowing that confidence and ſecurity are great enemies to virtue, thought proper to forewarn him again of his danger; and told him, that the cock ſhould not crow before he had denied him. Peter, however, ſtill continued to repeat his confidence, I will die with thee, but never deny thee. The diſciples all joined with Peter in profeſſing their fixed reſolution of ſuffering death, rather than they would deny their maſter; but the event fully confirmed the prediction of our Saviour. From whence we may learn how ignorant men are of themſelves, and that to be virtuous, it is not enough that we form the ſtrongeſt reſolutions.

The compaſſionate Redeemer of mankind, not willing to loſe one ſingle moment of the ſhort time of his miniſtry that yet remained, continued to inſtruct his diſciples in the great truths he came into the world to explain; and from the vines, which were growing round him on the mount of Olives, he began his excellent diſcourſe with the parable of the vine, which I ſhall endeavour to explain in the following paraphraſe.

Hitherto, ſaid the bleſſed Jeſus, the Jewiſh church and nation have been the peculiar care of providence; as a choice and goodly vine, likely to bring forth much fruit, is the eſpecial care of the husbandman. But from henceforth, my church, my diſciples, and the profeſſors of my religion, of what country or nation ſo ever they be, ſhall become the people of God, and the peculiar care of Divine Providence. I will be to them as the root and ſtock of a vine, of which they are the branches, and my Father the husbandman and vine-dreſſer.

As in the management of a choice vine, the ſkilful vine-dreſſer cuts off all barren and ſuperfluous branches, that they may not burden, nor exhauſt the tree, and prunes and dreſſes the fruitful branches, that they may grow continually, and bear more fruit; ſo in the government of my church all uſeleſs, wicked, and incorrigible members, my Father by his juſt judgment cuts off and deſtroys; but thoſe who are ſincerely pious and good, he, by the various and merciful diſpenſations of his Providence towards them, tries, purifies, and amends, that they may daily improve, and be more and more abundant in all good works.

Now ye, my Apoſtles, are ſuch members as theſe, being purified in heart and mind, and prepared for every good work, by your lively faith in me, and ſincere reſolutions to obey my commands. Continue ſtedfaſtly in this ſtate, and then you

may be ſure of deriving all ſpiritual bleſſings from me, as the branches receive ſap and nouriſhment from the vine. But as a branch, without continuing in the vine, cannot bear any fruit, but preſently dries up and periſhes; ſo ye, unleſs ye continue ſtedfaſt in your communion with me, by a lively faith and ſincere obedience, ſo as to receive grace and ſpiritual bleſſings, can never bring forth any good fruit of true holineſs and righteouſneſs, but will fall into vanity, ſuperſtition, and wickedneſs, and at laſt utterly periſh.

I am as it were, I ſay, the root and ſtock of the vine, whereof ye are the branches. He that continues to adhere to me, by conſtant faith in me, by imitating my example, and by obeying my commands, ſhall bring forth much fruit, of true virtue and holineſs, unto everlaſting life: even as a branch which continues to grow in a vine, and receives ſap and nouriſhment from it. But he that does not continue his relation to me in this manner, is a falſe and uſeleſs profeſſor of my religion, and ſhall be caſt out from me, and periſh for ever; even as a fruitleſs branch is cut off from the vine, and left to wither and dry, and is at laſt burnt in the fire.

If ye continue in me, by believing my words, and holding faſt what ye believe, and obeying and practiſing it, accordingly no power, or malice either of man or of devils, ſhall be able to hurt you, or oppoſe your doctrines. For though I be abſent from you in body, yet I will hear your prayers, and my father himſelf alſo will hear you; and whatſoever ye ſhall aſk, for the glory of the Almighty, and the propagation of my true religion in the world, ſhall certainly be granted you. But above all things carefully remember to demonſtrate your continuance in me, by abounding in all good works of holineſs, righteouſneſs, and charity. This is the honour which my father deſires, and expects from you; even as it is the glory and deſire of a vine-dreſſer, that his vine ſhould bring forth much fruit. And this is the honour that I myſelf expect from you, that ye ſhould prove yourſelves to be really and indeed my diſciples, by imitating my example and obeying my commands. This ye are bound to do, not only in duty, but in gratitude alſo; for as my father hath loved me, ſo have I alſo loved you, and ye in like manner ought to love me again, that you may continue to be loved by me. But the way to expreſs your love towards me, and to continue to be loved by me, is to keep my commandments: even as I, by keeping my father's commandments, have expreſſed my love towards him, and continue to be loved by him.

Theſe things have I ſpoken to you before my departure, that the comfort ye have taken in my preſence, may be continued in my abſence, and even encreaſed at the coming of the Holy Spirit, as it will be upon this condition, which I have ſo often repeated to you, that you keep my commandments. And the principal of theſe commandments is, that ye love one another; not after the com-

mon faſhion of the world, but in ſuch a manner as I have loved you: nor can you be ignorant what ſort of love that is, when I tell you that I am now going to lay down my life for you. This is the higheſt inſtance, in which it is poſſible for a man to expreſs his love towards his greateſt friends and benefactors: but this I am now going to do for you, and for all mankind. I do not conſider you as my benefactors, but as my friends, upon this eaſy condition only, that ye keep my commandments. I might indeed juſtly call you ſervants, conſidering the infinite diſtance between me and you, and the obligation ye have to obey my commandments: but I have not treated you as ſervants, who are not admitted into their maſter's counſels, but as friends revealing to you the whole will of my father, with all freedom and plainneſs.

I have, I ſay, behaved myſelf to you, as to the neareſt friends. Not that you firſt obliged me, or did any acts of kindneſs for me, but I have freely, and of my own good pleaſure, choſen you to be my apoſtles, and the preachers of my goſpel, that you may go and declare the will of God to the world, and bring forth much and laſting fruit in the converſion of men to the knowledge of the truth, and to the profeſſion and practice of true religion and virtue. In the performance of this work, whatſoever ye ſhall aſk of my father in my name, in order to enable you to perform it effectually and with full ſucceſs, ſhall certainly be granted you.

Now all theſe things which I have ſpoken unto you concerning the greatneſs of my love towards you, in chuſing you to be my apoſtles, in revealing unto you the whole will of my father, and in laying down my life for you; I have urged and inculcated upon you this reaſon chiefly, as I at firſt told you, that ye may learn after my example to *love one another*. The world indeed, you muſt expect, will hate and perſecute you upon my account. But this you ought not to be ſurpriſed or terrified at; knowing that it is no worſe treatment than I myſelf have met with before you.

The reaſon why the generality of the world have oppoſed and perſecuted me, is becauſe my doctrine is inconſiſtent with their luſts and paſſions, their covetouſneſs and unjuſt ambition. And for the ſame reaſon, there is no doubt but they will oppoſe and perſecute you alſo. If ye were of the humour of the world, flattering men in their ſins, and teaching doctrines conſiſtent with their luſts and paſſions, the world doubtleſs would love and honour you. But ſince I have choſen you out of the world, to reprove its vices, and to preach the neceſſity of reformation, and of men amending their lives, it is no wonder if the world hate and perſecute you.

Be not therefore ſurpriſed, when ye meet with oppoſition; nor think to find better treatment in the world, than I myſelf have done. Remember what I have already told you, that the diſciple is not above his Maſter; nor is he that is ſent greater

than he that ſent him. If men had generally and readily embraced my doctrine, you might indeed have had ſome reaſon to expect that they would willingly have received your's alſo. But ſince I myſelf have ſuffered great indignities and perſecutions from wicked and perverſe, from obſtinate and incorrigible men, only for oppoſing their vices, it is highly reaſonable that you ſhould expect to undergo the like treatment upon the like account. In all which ſufferings you will moreover have this further comfortable conſideration to ſupport you, that the juſtice of your own cauſe, and the injuſtice of your perſecutors, will by that very means moſt evidently appear; ſeeing ye are perſecuted only for profeſſing and preaching in my name the doctrine of true religion and virtue; and they perſecute you only becauſe they know not God, and out of mere malice will not bear to be inſtructed in his commands.

Indeed, had not I appeared to the world with all poſſible demonſtrations of authority and truth, teaching men a moſt holy and undeniable doctrine, ſufficient to reform their manners and amend their lives, and moreover demonſtrating my divine commiſſion by ſuch proofs as ought to ſatisfy and convince the moſt doubting and ſuſpicious minds; they might have had ſome plea and excuſe of ignorance for their unbelief. But now, ſince all reaſonable evidence has been offered them, and proper methods uſed for their converſion and ſalvation, and yet they wilfully and obſtinately reject theſe means of grace, it is plain, they have no excuſe for their ſin; but they oppoſe and perſecute you only becauſe they will not forſake their worldly luſts, and out of mere malice will not bear to be inſtructed in the commands of the Almighty. So that they who oppoſe and perſecute you, as they have before perſecuted me, ſhew plainly that they are haters of God, and of his moſt holy commandments. Which is, as I have already told you, a plain evidence of the juſtice of your own cauſe, and of the injuſtice of your perſecutors.

If I had not, I ſay, done ſuch works among them as no man ever did, they might indeed have had ſome appearance of excuſe for their ſin. But now, having ſeen abundant proofs of my authority, and undeniable evidence of the truth of my doctrine, and yet wilfully and obſtinately perſiſting to oppoſe it, becauſe inconſiſtent with their luſts; it is plain that their diſhonouring me is a diſhonour done to God himſelf, and a direct contempt of his commands: ſo that they are utterly inexcuſable. But it is no wonder, when men have given themſelves wholly up to be governed by worldly affections, paſſions, and vices, they ſhould act contrary to all the reaſon and evidence in the world. For this is but the natural conſequence of obſtinate and habitual wickedneſs; and hereby is only fulfilled in me what holy David long ſince prophetically complained of, that they hated him without a cauſe.

But notwithſtanding all the oppoſition that wicked and incorrigible men

men will make againſt my doctrine, there will not be wanting powerful promoters of it, who ſhall effectually overcome all oppoſition. For the comforter, whom I ſaid I will ſend you from heaven, even that *ſpirit of truth*, which cometh forth, and is ſent from the Father, ſhall, when he cometh, with wonderful efficacy bear teſtimony to the truth of my doctrine, and cauſe it to ſpread through the world with incredible ſucceſs. Nay, and ye yourſelves alſo, though now ſo weak, fearful, and doubting, ſhall then very powerfully bear teſtimony to the truth of all the things whereof ye, having been all along preſent with me, have been eye-witneſſes from the beginning.

Thus have I warned you beforehand, of the oppoſition and perſecution ye muſt expect to meet with in the world, that when it cometh ye may not be ſurpriſed and terrified ſo as to be diſcouraged thereby from perſiſting in the performance of your duty.

Ye muſt expect particularly, that the chief prieſts and rulers of the Jews, men of great hypocriſy and ſuperſtition, zealous for their ceremonies and ritual traditions, but careleſs to know and obey the will of Omnipotence in matters of great and eternal obligation, and invincibly prejudiced againſt the ſpiritual holineſs and purity of my doctrine: theſe, I ſay, you muſt expect will excommunicate you as apoſtates, and caſt you out of all their ſocieties, as the vileſt of malefactors. Nay, to ſuch an abſurd height of malice will their ſuperſtition carry them, that they will even fancy they promote the ſervice of God, and the cauſe of religion, when they moſt barbarouſly murder and deſtroy you. But I have warned you of all this before hand, that ye may prepare and fortify yourſelves againſt it; and that when it cometh to paſs, ye may remember I foretold it to you, and your faith in me may thereby be ſtrengthened.

I did not indeed tell you particularly of theſe things at the beginning, when you firſt followed me and became my diſciples; becauſe then I was to continue with you in perſon, and ſupport you in all things by my immediate preſence. But now being about to leave you, I think it neceſſary to acquaint you what things are likely to come upon you after my departure, and alſo at the ſame time what comfort you may expect to ſupport you under them.

Now I muſt mention the melancholy part, namely, that I am going from you, and that great temptations will befal you in my abſence; this, indeed, ye readily apprehend, and ſuffer your hearts to be overwhelmed with grief at the thoughts of it. But the comfortable part of my diſcourſe, namely, that my departure is only in order to return to him that ſent me, and that I will ſoon after ſend you the Holy Spirit, and the other advantages that will thence reſult to you, are neither conſidered, nor are you ſolicitous about them. Nevertheleſs, if ye will liſten, I will plainly tell you the truth. Ye are ſo far from having reaſon to be dejected at the thoughts of my departure, that on the contrary, it is

really

really profitable and expedient for you that I ſhould now depart; for ſuch is the order and diſpenſation of providence towards you, and the appointment of my father's eternal and all-wiſe counſel, that before I go and take poſſeſſion of my kingdom, the comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, cannot be ſent unto you; but when I am departed from you, and have all power in heaven and earth committed unto me, then I will ſend him unto you. And when he cometh he ſhall abundantly ſupport and comfort you under all your troubles; ſhall powerfully plead your cauſe againſt your adverſaries; and ſhall, with wonderful efficacy, cauſe the doctrine of the goſpel to ſpread and prevail in the world againſt all oppoſition He ſhall particularly, and in a moſt extraordinary and convincing manner, make the world ſenſible of the greatneſs and heinouſneſs of a ſin of which they were not aware; of the righteouſneſs and juſtice of a diſpenſation they did not underſtand, and of the execution of a moſt remarkable judgment they did not expect. Firſt, by wonderfully atteſting and confirming the truth of my doctrine, by the gift of tongues, and other wonderful ſigns, he ſhall convince the world of the greatneſs and heinouſneſs of their ſins, in diſbelieving and rejecting me. Secondly, by demonſtrating, that my departure out of the world, was not periſhing and dying, but only a returning to my father, in order to be inveſted with all power both in heaven and earth, he ſhall convince the world of the righteouſneſs and juſtice of my cauſe, and of the excellency of that diſpenſation, which I preached and declared to mankind. Laſtly, by mightily deſtroying the power of the devil and the dominion of ſin, and propagating the doctrine of true religion in the world with wonderful efficacy and ſucceſs, he ſhall convince men of my power and authority to execute judgment upon mine enemies, for the eſtabliſhment of my kingdom upon earth.

There are yet many other things hereafter to be done in relation to the ſettling and eſtabliſhing of my church, which if it were proper I would now acquaint you with, but ye are not yet prepared to underſtand and receive them. Howbeit when the ſpirit of truth, whom I promiſed you, is come, he ſhall enlarge your underſtandings, remove your prejudices, and inſtruct you in all neceſſary and divine truths, to enable you to go through that great work which I have begun in perſon, and which I will carry on by your miniſtry; for the ſpirit is not to begin any new work, or to found any new doctrine of himſelf. But as I have taught and will teach you only in my father's name, ſo the ſpirit ſhall inſtruct you only in mine and my father's will, and in things neceſſary to promote and carry on the ſame deſign.

Every thing that he does ſhall be only in order to manifeſt my glory, and eſtabliſh my religion in the world: even as every thing that I have done has been only to manifeſt my father's glory, and reveal his will to mankind. For as all that I have taught is only what I received from my

my father, ſo all that the ſpirit ſhall teach you is only what he receives from me.

Whatſoever, I ſay, the ſpirit ſhall teach you is only what he receives from me; for receiving from my father, I call receiving from me, and teaching his will is teaching mine; ſeeing all things that the father hath are common to me, and all power and dominion is by him committed to me.

And now be careful to remember what matter for comfort I have given you, and ſupport yourſelves with it under the approaching diſtreſs. It is now indeed but a very little while before I ſhall be taken away from you; nevertheleſs let not this cauſe you to deſpair: for, after I am departed, it will be alſo a little a while before I appear to you again; foraſmuch as my being taken away from you is not periſhing, but only returning to my father.

At theſe laſt words of Jeſus, the diſciples were greatly diſturbed and troubled, not underſtanding his true meaning, that in a very ſhort time he ſhould be taken from them by death; and that after having overcome death by a glorious reſurrection, he would appear to them again before his aſcenſion into heaven. Not underſtanding this, I ſay, they enquired one of another, what can he mean by telling us, that in a very time he ſhall be taken out of our ſight; and that in a very little time more we ſhall ſee him again, and this becauſe he goeth to the father? We cannot underſtand the meaning of all this.

Jeſus obſerving their perplexity, and knowing that they were deſirous of aſking him, replied, Why are ye thus diſturbed and perplexed about what I told you? Is it a thing ſo very hard to be underſtood, that I ſaid, within a very little time I ſhould be taken away from you, and that within a very little time more I ſhould appear to you again? Verily, verily, I tell you I muſt very ſoon depart out of this world. And when the world, who are your enemies, will rejoice and triumph over you, as if they had deſtroyed me, and wholly ſuppreſſed you; ye for your parts will be overwhelmed with grief and ſorrow. But within a ſhort time I will return to you again; and then your ſorrow ſhall be turned into exceeding great joy.

Even as a woman when ſhe is in labour hath great pain and ſorrow for the preſent, but as ſoon as ſhe is delivered, forgets all her ſufferings, and rejoices greatly at the birth of her ſon; ſo ye, while ye are under the immediate apprehenſion of my departure from you, and during that time of diſtreſs and temptation, which ſhall befal you in my abſence, will be full of ſorrow and anxiety of mind; but when I return to you again, then ye ſhall rejoice with joy unſpeakable and full of glory, and no power or malice of man ſhall ever be able to take from you any more the cauſe or continuance of it.

But though I ſhall return to you again, and your hearts will thereupon be filled with inexpreſſible joy, and which never ſhall be taken from you any more; yet there will be no ne-

ceſſity that I ſhould then continue long with you in perſon, to inſtruct you upon every occaſion, as I have now done with my own mouth. For beſides that the Holy Spirit will be ſent to inſtruct you in all things neceſſary, my father himſelf alſo will hear your petitions, and be ready to grant you whatſoever you ſhall deſire of him in my name, and as being my diſciples. Hitherto ye have aſked nothing of God in my name; but from henceforth put up your petitions in my name; and whatſoever ye ſhall ſo aſk for the glory of God, and in order to enable you to go through the work of your miniſtry ſucceſsfully, ſhall certainly be granted you; that your joy, which will begin at my appearing to you again after my death may be completed by the wonderful ſucceſs and efficacy of your own miniſtry.

Theſe things I have told you at preſent imperfect and obſcurely, according as your capacities are able to bear them. But the time is coming, when your prejudices being removed, I will ſpeak to you with more openneſs, freedom, and plainneſs the whole will of my father concerning the nature and eſtabliſhment of my kingdom, and what things and in what manner ye ought to pray unto him for.

At that time ye ſhall with firm aſſurance pray to my father in my name for what ye want. And I need not tell you, that I will intercede with the father on your behalf; for beſides the love he has for me, and the power and authority my prayers have with him, he has moreover of himſelf a great love for you, and a ready diſpoſition to grant your prayers, becauſe ye are become grateful and acceptable to him by your love towards me, which ye have ſhewn in embracing willingly that holy doctrine which I have revealed to you from him.

To conclude: the ſum of what I have told you is briefly and plainly this. I come down from heaven from God my father, and have lived upon earth in the ſtate of frail and mortal man, that I might reveal to mankind the will of my heavenly father, and the way to attain eternal life and happineſs; and now having finiſhed this great work, I am about to leave this world, and return again to my father from whence I at firſt came. Theſe laſt words of Jeſus, being ſomewhat more plain and expreſs than any he had before ſpoken, ſo that now the diſciples clearly perceived that the departure he had ſo often mentioned was no other than his actual going out of this world, they replied, Now Lord you ſpeak plainly, and without any figure; ſo that we apprehend fully what you mean. And now that our curioſity is ſatisfied, you have likewiſe greatly confirmed our faith; having given us a certain token, whereby we are aſſured that you know all things, even the hearts and ſecret thoughts of men; ſince you have anſwered us a queſtion which gave us great perplexity, and were deſirous to aſk your opinion, but were afraid: but now we are convinced that you are indued with a truly divine power, and did indeed come forth from God. To which

Jeſus

Jeſus anſwered, and do you now at length firmly believe in me? are you reſolved to continue ſtedfaſt in this faith? do you think yourſelves able to perſevere immovably in the profeſſion of it? Be not confident of your own ſtrength; but pray that ye may be delivered from temptation in time of diſtreſs, ſuch as will come upon ye much ſooner than ye expect. For I tell you, that ye will all of ye within a few hours utterly forſake me, and fly, in hopes to ſecure yourſelves, leaving me alone. And yet I ſhould not ſay alone, ſince my father is with me, who is more than all. I have therefore acquainted you with theſe things before-hand, that your minds may be furniſhed with ſufficient matter of comfort and ſtrength to bear up under all temptations, from the conſideration of my having foretold both what diſtreſſes will befal you, and how ye ſhall terminate your victory over all your enemies. You muſt indeed expect to meet with much affliction, but let not this diſcourage you. I have ſubdued the world; follow my example, and partake of my reward.

Having thus finiſhed his diſcourſe, *Jeſus lift up his eyes to heaven, and prayed, ſaying*, Oh Almighty father, now the time of my ſuffering, for which I was ſent into the world, is arrived; I intreat thee ſupport me under it, and make me triumph over death by a glorious reſurrection and aſcenſion into heaven; that by this means the glory may redound to thee, and cauſe thy will to be believed and obeyed through all the world to the ſalvation of mankind; according to the full intent of that office and power with which thou didſt originally inveſt me to receive all fitly diſpoſed perſons into the covenant of ſalvation, and to aſſiſt and preſerve them in it unto everlaſting happineſs. The condition of this covenant is, that they firmly believe and obey thee, as the only true God, and Jeſus Chriſt as the true Meſſiah whom thou haſt ſent.

In order to the bringing about this great deſign of ſalvation, I have declared thy will to mankind; I have publiſhed thy precepts and diſcharged the great miſſion intruſted to me; I have preached thy doctrine of repentance to ſalvation, and have finiſhed the work which thou ſenteſt me to do, to the glory of thy name upon earth; and now to complete the great deſign, do thou, oh Almighty Father, likewiſe glorify me with thine own ſelf. Support me under my ſufferings: let me prevail and triumph over death, by a glorious reſurrection, and exalt me again to the ſame glory in heaven which I had with thee before the creation of the univerſe. I have manifeſted thy will to my diſciples, the men that thou gaveſt me out of the world, and to all ſuch as were fitted, and diſpoſed to receive it; to ſuch as by a pious habit, and teachable diſpoſition, were prepared to embrace whatever doctrine ſhould appear to come from thee. To thoſe perſons thou didſt in thine infinite wiſdom appoint, that thy truth ſhould be made known, and not to the prejudiced and vicious world. Therefore to them I have revealed the myſteries of thy king-

dom, the precepts of thy goſpel, and the doctrine of thy ſalvation. And this doctrine they have willingly embraced, ſtedfaſtly adhered to, and ſincerely obeyed: as they are fully ſatisfied and convinced, that what I taught them as from thee was really a divine doctrine taught by thine immediate appointment and command; and that I did not preach any human invention or inſtitution of men, but was really ſent by thy divine authority and commiſſion. For theſe perſons therefore I now pray, that as thou haſt begun the work of their ſalvation by my preaching and revealing to them thy will, while I have been preſent with them here upon earth, ſo alſo that thou wouldeſt preſerve them when I am departed from this world, and complete the work of their ſalvation by my reſurrection and aſcenſion into heaven after my death. I do not pray for the unbelieving impenitent world, but for thoſe who have embraced that moſt holy doctrine, which thou haſt taught them through me by my preaching; for thoſe who have glorified and will glorify my name by their miniſtry, and who conſequently are to be eſteemed as thine own, in common with me. I am now about to leave the world in order to return to thee; but theſe my diſciples, who continue after me, I recommend to thy divine protection, when I am gone: endue them with powers to perſevere in preaching and practiſing the truth, and to deliver the ſame holy doctrines which I have given to them, that ſo they may remain inſeparably united to me, as I am to thee. So long as I have been with them in the world, I have watched over them, and kept them from falling away, both by example, preaching, and continual admonition, according to the power and authority which thou didſt commit to me; nor has one of my Apoſtles miſcarried under my care, except that perfidious traitor, who, as the ſcripture foretold, has ungratefully conſpired with my enemies to deſtroy me, and will periſh according to his deſerts. While I have continued with my diſciples, I have watched over them and preſerved them under mine own eye; but now, as I am going to leave the world, I beſeech thee to keep and aſſiſt them by thy good ſpirit; and let the expectation of their continuing under thy ſpecial care and protection, be their comfort and ſupport in my abſence. The world indeed will perſecute and hate them on this account, as my doctrine is repugnant to the luſts and affections, the paſſions, deſigns, and inclinations of worldly men; it muſt neceſſarily be that the vicious and incorrigible world will oppoſe and perſecute them, as it has before perſecuted me. I beſeech thee therefore to take them under thy particular care, to ſupport them againſt the violence and oppreſſion of an evil world. I do not deſire that thou ſhouldeſt take them out of the world, but preſerve them in it to be inſtruments of thy word, thy glory, and to be teachers of thy truth; nor ſuffer them to be either deſtroyed by the malice and violence, or corrupt-

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ed by the evil cuſtoms and opinions of a perverſe and wicked generation.

They are of a temper and ſpirit very different from the current affections and common diſpoſitions of the world, according to the example of purity which I have ſet before them. Do thou preſerve and increaſe in them that moderation and candour of mind, cauſe them to be thoroughly affected and impreſſed with that true doctrine ſo frequently recommended to them from my mouth, ſo as to expreſs it viſibly in their lives and practice, and to promote it zealouſly in their preaching, that they may both by word and good example, become worthy and ſucceſsful miniſters of my goſpel.

For as thou haſt ſent me into the world to reveal thy will to mankind, ſo ſend I theſe my apoſtles to continue preaching the ſame doctrine begun by me. And the principal deſign of my exemplary life, conſtant teaching, and now voluntarily offering myſelf to death for it, is to ſanctify and enable them to preach with ſucceſs and efficacy for the ſalvation of men. Neither pray I for theſe my apoſtles only, but for all others, who ſhall, by their preaching and practice, promote thy true religion; and being converted from the world, may, by their ſincere endeavours, go on to reform others, convincing the world of the excellency of their religion, and conſequently enforcing men to acknowledge the truth and divine authority thereof. For promoting which great end, I have communicated to my apoſtles the ſame power and authority of doing mighty works for the confirmation of their doctrine, and the evidence of thy truth, as thou didſt communicate to me; that ſo I working in them as thou haſt done in me, and thus confirming with great efficacy and demonſtration of the ſpirit, they may eſtabliſh the ſame doctrine which I publiſhed in perſon, the world may by this evidence, be convinced that I was really ſent by thee, and that my diſciples act by the ſame divine commiſſion.

Holy and Almighty Father all thoſe whom thou haſt thus given me, who have heartily embraced my doctrine and ſincerely obeyed it, I deſire that thou wouldeſt make them partakers of the ſame happineſs with myſelf, and exalt them to behold the incomprehenſible glory wherewith thou didſt originally inveſt me in thy eternal love before the foundation of the world. The generality of mortals, O righteous father! the covetous and ambitious, the politic and deſigning men of this world have not known thee, nor been willing to embrace, and obey the revelation of thy will. But I have known thy will, and have made it known to my diſciples, men of ſimplicity and honeſty; and they have embraced and obeyed it. And I will continually make it known to them more and more, that they may grow up and improve in faith, in holineſs and in all good works, ſo as finally to arrive and cauſe others to arrive at that eternal happineſs, which is the effect of thy infinite love towards me, and through me towards them.

When the intercessory prayer was ended, Jesus and his disciples came down from the mount of Olives into a field below called Gethsemane, through which the brook Cedron ran, and in it, on the other side of the brook, was a garden, called the garden of Gethsemane. Here he desired his disciples to sit down, perhaps at the garden-door within, till he should retire to pray, taking with him, Peter, James, and John, those three select disciples whom he had before chosen to be witnesses of his transfiguration, and now to be eye-witnesses of his passion, leaving the other disciples at the garden-door to watch the approach of Judas and his band. The sufferings he was on the point of undergoing were so great, that the very prospect of them terrified him, and made him express himself in this doleful exclamation, *My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch.* On this great occasion he sustained those grievous sorrows in his soul, by which, as well as by dying on the cross, he became a sin-offering, and accomplished the redemption of mankind. He now withdrew from them about a stone's cast, and his human nature being now overburdened beyond measure, he found it necessary to retire and pray, that if it was possible, or consistent with the salvation of the world, he might be delivered from the sufferings which were then lying on him. It was not the fear of dying on the cross which made him speak or pray in such a manner. To suppose this, would infinitely degrade his character. Make his sufferings as terrible as possible, clothe them with all the aggravating circumstances of distress; yet the blessed Jesus, whose human nature was strengthened by being connected with the divine, could not shrink at the prospect of sufferings, or betray a weakness which many of his followers, who, tho' mere men, were strangers to; having encountered more terrible deaths without the least emotions. He addresses his divine father with a sigh of fervent wishes that the cup might if possible be removed from him: In the Greek, it is, "O that thou wouldest remove this cup from me." And having first kneeled and prayed, he fell prostrate on his face, accompanying his address with due expressions of resignation, adding, immediately, not as I will but as thou wilt. Having prayed he returned to his disciples, and finding them a sleep, he said to Peter, *Simon sleepest thou? couldest thou not watch one hour?* Thou who so lately boastedst of thy courage and constancy in my service, canst thou so soon forget thy master?

But in his greatest distress he never lost sight of that kind concern he had for his disciples. *Watch ye*, he says, *and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.* Neither was he on those extraordinary occasions in the least chagrined with the offences which they had committed through frailty and human weakness: on the contrary, was always willing to make excuses for them; alledging in their defence, *that the spirit* truly *was ready, but the flesh was weak.* It seems from these par-

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Engraved for the Life of Our Saviour.



And Jesus kneeled down and prayed, saying, Father, if thou be willing remove this Cup from me: nevertheless, not my Will, but thine be done. Luke XXII. 41, 42.

particulars, that he ſpent ſome conſiderable time in his addreſſes; becauſe the diſciples fell aſleep in his abſence, and he himſelf retired again to pray; for the ſorrows of our Lord continuing to increaſe upon him, affected him to ſuch a degree, that he retired a ſecond time, and prayed to the ſame purpoſe, ſaying, *Oh my father, if this cup may not paſs away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done:* after which he returned again to them, and found them a ſleep, *for their eyes were heavy.* He returned thus frequently to his diſciples, that they, by reading his diſtreſs in his countenance and geſture, might be witneſſes of his paſſion, which proves that his pains were beyond deſcription intenſe, and complicated; for he went away the third time to pray, and notwithſtanding an angel was ſent from heaven to comfort and ſtrengthen him, yet they overwhelmed him, and threw him into an agony: upon which he ſtill continued to pray more earneſtly. But the ſenſe of his ſufferings ſtill increaſing, they ſtrained his whole body to ſo violent a degree, that his blood was preſſed through the pores of his ſkin, which they pervaded, together with his ſweat, and fell down in large drops on the ground. *And he left them, and went away again. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, ſtrengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earneſtly: and his ſweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.* Thus did he ſuffer unſpeakable ſorrows in his ſoul, as long as the divine wiſdom thought proper. At length he obtained relief, being heard on account of his perfect and entire ſubmiſſion to the will of his heavenly father. *And when he roſe up from prayer, and was come to his diſciples, he found them ſleeping for ſorrow.* This circumſtance ſhews how much the diſciples were affected with their maſter's ſufferings. The ſenſations of grief which they felt on ſeeing his unſpeakable diſtreſs ſo overpowered them, that they ſunk into ſleep. Our bleſſed Saviour for the laſt time came to his diſciples, and ſeeing them aſleep, he ſaid, *Sleep on now and take your reſt, behold the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of ſinners. Riſe, let us be going: behold, he is at hand, that doth betray me,* Matt. xxvi. 45, 46.

CHAP. XXXIII.

Jeſus is apprehended. He reſtores Malchus's ear.

IT ſeems that the owner of the garden where he now was had been our Lord's acquaintance, perhaps his diſciple, who believing on him, conſidered himſelf as highly honoured in Jeſus's frequenting it, for the ſake of retirement, or devotion; and therefore had given him the free uſe of it whenever he pleaſed. We are told that Judas knew the place; for *Jeſus oft times reſorted thither, with his diſciples.* The chief prieſts and elders being informed by Judas, that the proper time for apprehending Jeſus was now come, ſent a band of ſoldiers with him, and ſervants carrying lanterns and torches, to

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to ſhew them the way; becauſe, tho' it was always full moon at the paſſover, the ſky might be dark with clouds, and the place whither they were going was ſhaded with trees. At the ſame time a deputation of their number accompanied the band, to ſee that every one did his duty. Judas having thus received a band of men and officers from the chief prieſts and Phariſees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches, and weapons; for they were exceeding anxious to ſecure and get him into their hands: and the ſoldiers, having, perhaps never ſeen Jeſus before, found it neceſſary that Judas ſhould diſtinguiſh him, and point him out to them by ſome particular ſign. St. Luke ſeems to ſay that Judas went before them at a little diſtance, to prepare them for the readier execution of their office, by kiſſing his maſter, the token they had agreed upon, that they might not miſtake him and ſeize a wrong perſon *And he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jeſus to kiſs him.* Nor can the account which St. John has given us be underſtood on any other ſuppoſition; who ſays, that after Judas was come up with the ſoldiers, Jeſus went out of the garden, and aſked them, who it was they were ſeeking? To which they replied, Jeſus of Nazareth. It therefore follows, that they were at a loſs to know him, which they could not have been, had they ſeen Judas kiſs him: the kiſs therefore muſt have been given in the garden before the band came up; nor is their agreement about the ſign inconſiſtent with this ſuppoſition; becauſe that confuſion which commonly attends the commiſſion of an evil action, might prevent Judas from giving the ſign at the proper ſeaſon. He went before the ſoldiers, on pretence, that he would lead them to the place, and ſhew them the man by kiſſing him: however, to conceal his villany from his maſter and the diſciples, he walked haſtily, and without waiting for the band, went up directly, and ſaluted him; feigning perhaps to apprize him of his danger. But Jeſus did not fail to convince him that he knew the meaning and intent of his ſalutation, ſaying, *betrayeſt thou the ſon of man with a kiſs?* Judas certainly concealed his treachery ſo well that Peter did not ſuſpect him, as it is probable, he would have ſtruck at him rather than at Malchus, the high prieſt's ſervant.

The appointed time of our Lord's ſufferings being now come, he did not, as formerly, avoid his enemies; but on the contrary, on their telling him they ſought Jeſus of Nazareth, he replied, *I am he*; thereby inſinuating to them, that he was willing to put himſelf into their hands. At the ſame time, to ſhew them that they could not apprehend him without his own conſent, he in an extraordinary manner exerted his divine power; he made the whole band fall back, and threw them to the ground. *Jeſus, therefore, knowing all things that ſhould come upon him, went forth, and ſaid unto them, whom ſeek ye? They anſwered him, Jeſus of Nazareth. Jeſus ſaith unto them, I am he. And*

Judas

Judas alſo who betrayed him ſtood with them. As ſoon then as he had ſaid unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground. But the ſoldiers and the Jews, imagining, perhaps, that they had been thrown down by ſome demon or evil ſpirit, with whom the Jews ſaid he was in confederacy, advanced towards him a ſecond time. *Then asked he them again, whom ſeek ye? and they ſaid, Jeſus of Nazareth. Jeſus anſwered, I have told you that I am he,* expreſſing again his willingneſs to fall into their hands. *If therefore ye ſeek me, let theſe go their way.* If your buſineſs be with me alone, ſuffer my diſciples to paſs: for the party had ſurrounded them alſo. He ſeems to have made this requeſt to the ſoldiers, that the ſaying might be fulfilled, which he ſpake, *of them which thou gaveſt me have I loſt none.* For as he always proportions the trials of his people to their ſtrength; ſo here he took care that the diſciples ſhould eſcape the ſtorm, which none but himſelf could ſuſtain.

At length, ſome of the ſoldiers, more daring than the reſt, rudely caught Jeſus, and bound him: upon which Peter drew his ſword, and ſmote off the ear of the prieſt's ſervant, who probably was ſhewing greater forwardneſs than the reſt in this buſineſs. *Then Simon Peter, having a ſword, drew it, and ſmote the high prieſt's ſervant, and cut off his right ear; the ſervant's name was Malchus.* The enraged apoſtle was on the point of ſingly attacking the whole band, when Jeſus ordered him to ſheath the ſword; telling him, that his unſeaſonable and imprudent defence might prove the occaſion of his deſtruction. *Then ſaid Jeſus unto him, put up again thy ſword into his place: for all they that take the ſword ſhall periſh with the ſword,* Matt. xxvi. 52. He told him likewiſe, that it implied both a diſtruſt of the divine Providence, which can always employ a variety of means for the ſafety of good men, and alſo his ignorance in the ſcriptures. Thinkeſt thou, ſaid he, that I cannot now pray to my father, and he ſhall preſently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then ſhall the ſcriptures be fulfilled, that thus it muſt be?

The word legion was a Roman military term, being the name which they gave to a body of five or ſix thouſand men; wherefore in regard that the band, which now ſurrounded them, was a Roman cohort, our Lord might make uſe of this term by way of contraſt, to ſhew what an inconſiderable thing the cohort was, in compariſon of the force he could ſummon to his aſſiſtance; more than twelve legions, not of ſoldiers, but of angels. He yet was tenderly inclined to prevent any bad conſequences which might have flowed from Peter's raſhneſs, by healing the ſervant, and adding in his rebuke to him, a declaration of his willingneſs to ſuffer. *The cup which my father has given me ſhall I not drink it?*

The circumſtance of his healing the ear of Malchus, by touching it, ſeems to imply, that he created a new one in the place of that which was cut off; but though he performed

formed the cure ſome other way, it equally demonſtrates both his goodneſs and his power. No wound, or diſtemper was incurable in the hand of Jeſus: neither was any injury ſo great that he could not forgive. It ſeems ſomewhat ſurpriſing that this evident miracle did not make an impreſſion upon the chief prieſts, eſpecially, as our Lord put them in mind at the ſame time of his other miracles; for having firſt ſaid, *Suffer ye thus far; and he touched his ear, and healed him*, he added, *Be ye come out as againſt a thief with ſwords, and ſtaves? When I was daily with you in the temple, ye ſtretched forth no hands againſt me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkneſs*, Luke xxii. 51. They had kept at a diſtance during the attack, but drew near, when they underſtood that Jeſus was in their power; for they were proof againſt all conviction, being obſtinately bent on putting him to death. And the diſciples, when they ſaw their maſter in the hands of his enemies, forſook him and fled according to his prediction; notwithſtanding they might have followed him without any danger, as the prieſts had no deſign againſt them. *Then all the diſciples forſook him, and fled. Then the band and the captain and officers took Jeſus and bound him.* But it was not the cord which held him; his immenſe charity was by far a ſtronger band. He could have with more eaſe than Sampſon have broken thoſe weak ties, and exerted his divinity in a more wonderful manner; he could have ſtricken them all dead, with as much eaſe as he had before thrown them on the ground; but he patiently ſubmitted to this, as to every other indignity which they pleaſed to offer him; ſo meek was he under the greateſt injuries. Having thus ſecured him they led him away. *And there followed him a certain young man, having a linen cloth caſt about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him, and he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked.* This, perhaps, was the proprietor of the garden; who, being awakened with the noiſe, came out with the linen cloth, in which he had been lying, caſt round his naked body; and having a reſpect for Jeſus, followed him, forgetting the dreſs he was in.

They firſt led him to Annas, father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high-prieſt that year. Annas having himſelf diſcharged the office of high-prieſt, was conſequently a perſon of diſtinguiſhed character; which, together with his relation to the high-prieſt, made him worthy of the reſpect they now paid him. But he refuſed ſingly to meddle in the affair; they therefore carried Jeſus to Caiaphas himſelf, at whoſe palace the chief prieſts, elders, and ſcribes, were aſſembled, having ſtaid there all night to ſee the iſſue of their ſtratagem. This Caiaphas was he that adviſed the council to put Jeſus to death, even admitting he was innocent, for the ſafety of the whole Jewiſh nation. He ſeems to have enjoyed the ſacerdotal dignity during the whole courſe of Pilate's government in Judea: for he was advanced by Valerius Gratus, Pilate's predeceſſor, and was diveſted of it by Vitellius, gover-

Engravd for the Life of Our Saviour.



Jesus brought before Caiaphas.

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governor of Syria, after he had depoſed Pilate from his procuratorſhip.

CHAP. XXXIV.

Peter denies his maſter.

OUR Lord's trial in the high-prieſt's palace, and Peter's denying him, being cotemporary events, might be repeated by the Evangelical hiſtorians according to their pleaſure. The Evangeliſts Matthew and Mark deſcribe the trial firſt, as it is the principal fact; but Luke after the denials of Peter. John has preſerved the natural order here; for he begins with the firſt denial, becauſe it happened immediately after Peter entered the palace: then gives the hiſtory of the trial as the principal fact, concluding with the ſubſequent denials. But though this be the natural order, we may form a better notion of the denials by viewing them together previous to the trial.

The Apoſtles, no doubt, were in a great conſternation, when their maſter was apprehended, as appears from their forſaking him, and flying: ſome of them, however, recovering out of the pannic that had ſeized them, followed the band at a diſtance to ſee what the iſſue would be. Of this number was Peter, and another diſciple, whom John has mentioned without giving his name, and who therefore is ſuppoſed to have been John himſelf. This diſciple being acquainted at the high prieſt's, got admittance for himſelf firſt, and ſoon after for Peter, who had come with him. *And Simon Peter followed Jeſus, and ſo did another diſciple. That diſciple was known to the high-prieſt, and went in with Jeſus to the palace of the high prieſt. But Peter ſtood at the door without. Then went out that other diſciple, and ſpake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter. And when they had kindled a fire in the midſt of the hall, and were ſat down together, Peter ſat down among them.* The maid-ſervant who kept the door concluding Peter to be a diſciple alſo, followed him after to the fire, and looking earneſtly at him charged him with the ſuppoſed crime. *Then ſaith the damſel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou alſo one of this man's diſciples?* This blunt attack threw Peter into ſuch confuſion, that he flatly denied his having any connection with Jeſus, replying, *I am not*, and adding, *I know not, neither underſtand I what thou ſayeſt.* As if he had ſaid, I do not underſtand any reaſon, for your aſking me ſuch a queſtion. Thus the very Apoſtle who had before acknowledged his maſter to be the Meſſiah, the Son of the living God, who was honoured with the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and had ſo confidently boaſted of fortitude, and firm attachment to him in the greateſt dangers, proved an arrant deſerter of his cauſe upon trial. His ſhameful fears were altogether inexcuſable, as the enemy who attacked him was one of the weaker ſex, and the terror of the charge was in a great meaſure taken off by the inſinuation made in it that John was likewiſe known to be

Chriſt's diſciple: for as he was known at the high prieſt's, he was conſequently known in that character. *Art thou not alſo one of this man's diſciples?* Art thou not one of them as well as he who is ſitting with you? Equivocation, mental reſervation, and ſuch like baſe arts, are below the dignity and courage of reaſonable creatures; but downright lying, and that in the preſence of John his fellow-diſciple, is abominable, and can only be accounted for by the confuſion and pannic which had ſeized him on this occaſion. As Peter's inward perturbation muſt have appeared in his countenance and geſture, he did not chuſe to ſtay long with the ſervants at the fire. He went out therefore into the porch, where he was a little concealed. *And he went out into the porch, and the cock crew*, namely, for the firſt time. *And a maid ſaw him again, and began to ſay to them that ſtood by, this is one of them; and he again denied it with an oath, I know not the man:* adding perjury to lying.

After Peter had been thus attacked without doors, he thought proper to return and mix with the crowd at the fire. *And Simon Peter ſtood and warmed himſelf.* From this circumſtance we may conclude, that the enſuing was the third denial; and that Peter left the porch where the ſecond denial happened, and was come again into the hall. *Here one of the ſervants of the high Prieſt (being his kinſman whoſe ear Peter cut off, ſaith, did not I ſee thee in the garden with him? Peter then denied again, and immediately the cock crew.* The words of Malchus's kinſman bringing to Peter's remembrance what he had done to that ſlave, threw him into ſuch a pannic, that when thoſe who ſtood by repeated the charge, he impudently denied it: *He even began to curſe and to ſwear, ſaying, I know not this man of whom ye ſpeak.* For when they heard Peter deny the charge, they ſupported it by an argument drawn from the accent with which he pronounced his anſwer. Surely thou art one of them; for thou art a Galilean, and thy ſpeech agreeth thereto: ſo that being preſſed on all ſides, to give his lie the better colour, he prophaned the name of God, by imprecating the bittereſt curſes on himſelf, if he was telling a falſhood. Perhaps, he hoped by theſe acts of impiety to convince them effectually that he was not the diſciple of the holy Jeſus.

Thus the Apoſtle denied his maſter three diſtinct times, with oaths and aſſeverations, totally forgetting the vehement proteſtations he had made a few hours before, that he would never deny him. He was permitted to fall in this manner, to teach us two leſſons: firſt, that whatever a perſon's attainments might have been formerly, if once he paſſes the bounds of innocence, he commonly proceeds from bad to worſe, one ſin naturally drawing on another; for which reaſon the very leaſt appearances of evil are to be dreaded, and the greateſt humility and ſelf-diffidence maintained. In the ſecond place, we may learn, that no ſinner who repents, and has confidence in the goodneſs of God, ſhould ever deſpair. For he no ſooner denied his maſter

maſter the third time, than the cock crew, and awakened in him the firſt conviction of his ſin. *And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter; and Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had ſaid unto him, before the cock crow ſhalt thou deny me thrice. And Peter went out and wept bitterly.* St. Luke is the only Evangeliſt who has preſerved this beautiful circumſtance of Chriſt's turning and looking on Peter. The members of the council who ſat on Jeſus, were placed at the upper end of the hall: in the other were the ſervants with Peter at the fire; ſo that Jeſus being probably placed on ſome eminence, that his judges, who were numerous, might ſee and hear him, could eaſily look over towards Peter, and obſerve him denying him, and in paſſionate terms loud enough to be heard, perhaps, over all the place. The look pierced him, and with the crowing of the cock brought his maſter's prediction freſh into his mind. He was ſtung with deep remorſe; and being unable to contain himſelf, he covered his face with his garment to conceal the confuſion he was in, and going out into the porch wept very bitterly. All this paſſed while the prieſts examined Jeſus with many taunts and revilings; and while the moſt zealous of Chriſt's diſciples was denying him with oaths and imprecations, the others inſulted him in the moſt inhuman manner. Thus a complication of injuries, inſults and indignities, was at one time heaped upon the bleſſed Redeemer, the meek and mild Jeſus, the ſuffering and wonderfully patient Son of the moſt high God.

CHAP. XXXV.

Jeſus is tried by the council.

WHEN the band of ſoldiers arrived at the high prieſt's with Jeſus, they found there all the chief prieſts, the ſcribes, and the elders aſſembled. *And as ſoon as it was day, the elders of the people, and the chief prieſts, and the ſcribes came together, and led him into their council.* Probably the trial did not begin immediately on our Lord's arrival; for though many of the judges were at the high prieſt's before him, ſome perſons of diſtinction might be abſent whoſe coming the reſt were out of reſpect inclined to wait for: but as the paſſover was at hand they had no time to loſe; ſo that as ſoon as the council was fully met, the trial was begun. *And the high prieſt aſked Jeſus of his diſciples, and his doctrine.* He enquired of him what his diſciples were; for what end he had gathered them, whether it was to make himſelf a king, and what the doctrine was which he taught them? In theſe queſtions there was a great deal of art; for as the crime laid to our Saviour's charge was, that he had ſet up for the Meſſiah, and deluded the people, they expected he would claim that dignity in his preſence, and ſo would on his own confeſſion have condemned him, without any further proceſs. This was unfair, as it was artful and enſnaring. To oblige a priſoner on his trial to confeſs what might take away his life,

was a very inequitable method of proceding; and Jeſus expreſſed his opinion thereof with very good reaſon, and complained of it, bidding them prove what they had laid to his charge by witneſſes. *Jeſus anſwered him, I ſpake openly to the world; I ever taught in the ſynagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always reſort, and in ſecret have I ſaid nothing. Why aſkeſt thou me? aſk them which heard me, what I have ſaid unto them; behold they know what I ſaid.* It was greatly to the honour of our bleſſed Redeemer, that all his actions were done in public, under the eye even of his enemies; becauſe, had he been carrying on any impoſture, the lovers of goodneſs and truth had thus abundant opportunities of detecting him with propriety: he therefore in his defence appealed to that part of his character, yet his anſwer was conſtrued diſreſpectful; for, *when he had thus ſpoken, one of the officers, which ſtood by, ſtruck Jeſus with the palm of his hand, ſaying, anſwereſt thou the high prieſt ſo?* To which he meekly replied with the greateſt ſerenity, *If I have ſpoken evil, bear witneſs of the evil: but if well, why ſmiteſt thou me?* Shew me, prove before this court, wherein my crime conſiſts, or record it in the evidence on the face of my trial; which if you cannot, how can you anſwer this inhuman treatment to a defenceleſs priſoner, ſtanding on his trial before the world, and in open court?

Thus Jeſus became an example of his own precept. *And if a man ſmite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the left alſo.* Matt. v. 44. bearing the greateſt injuries with a patience that could not be provoked.

When the council found that Jeſus declined anſwering the queſtions whereby they expected to have drawn from him an acknowledgment of his being the Meſſiah, they proceeded to examine many witneſſes to prove his having aſſumed that character; as they conſidered ſuch a pretenſion as blaſphemy in his mouth, who being only a man, according to their opinion, could not, without the higheſt affront to the divine majeſty, pretend to the title of the ſon of God, as it belonged only to the Meſſiah.

But in this examination they acted like intereſted and enraged perſecutors, rather than impartial judges, forming their queſtions in the moſt artful manner, in order, if poſſible, to draw expreſſions from them which they might pervert into ſuſpicions of guilt, as ſome foundation for condemning Jeſus, who had ſo long and faithfully laboured for their ſalvation.

Their witneſſes however diſappointed them, ſome of them diſagreeing in their ſtory, and others mentioning things of no manner of importance. At laſt two perſons agreed in their depoſitions, namely, in hearing him ſay, that he was able to deſtroy the temple of God, and to raiſe it in three days. But this teſtimony was abſolutely falſe; for our great Redeemer never ſaid he could deſtroy and build the temple of Jeruſalem in three days, as they affirmed. It is true, that after baniſhing

niſhing the traders from the temple, when the Jews deſired to know by what authority he undertook to make ſuch a reformation, he referred them to the miracle of his reſurrection; bidding them *deſtroy this temple* (pointing probably to his body) *and in three days he would raiſe it up.* The witneſſes therefore, either thro' malice or ignorance, perverted his anſwer into an affirmation, that he was able to deſtroy, and build the magnificent temple of Jeruſalem in three days: and the judges conſidered this aſſertion as blaſphemy, becauſe it could be only done by the divine power.

During the whole time, our Saviour made no reply to the evidences that were produced againſt him, which greatly provoked the high prieſt, who, ſuppoſing that he intended by his ſilence to put an affront on the council, roſe from his ſeat, and with great perturbation, demanded the reaſon for ſo remarkable a conduct. *Anſwereſt thou nothing*, ſaid he, *what is it which theſe witneſs againſt thee?* And ſome of the council added, *Art thou the Chriſt?* To which our bleſſed Saviour anſwered, if I ſhould tell you plainly, you would not believe me; and if I ſhould demonſtrate it to you by the moſt evident and undeniable arguments, ye would neither be convinced, nor let me go.

The high prieſt finding it impoſſible to enſnare Jeſus, and being deſirous of rendering the trial as ſhort as poſſible, ſaid to him, I adjure you ſolemnly by the dreadful and tremendous name of God, in whoſe preſence you ſtand, that you tell us plainly and truly, whether thou art the Meſſiah, the ſon of God?

This queſtion was artfully contrived; for if Jeſus ſhould anſwer it in the affirmative, they were ready to condemn him, as a blaſphemer; if in the negative, they intended to puniſh him as an impoſtor, who, by accepting the honours and titles of the Meſſiah from the people, had deceived them.

The conſequence attending his confeſſion of the truth did not, however, intimidate the bleſſed Jeſus; for, being adjured by the chief magiſtrate, he immediately confeſſed the charge, adding, ye ſhall ſhortly ſee a convincing evidence of this truth in that wonderful and unparalleled deſtruction which I will ſend upon the Jewiſh nation; in the quick and powerful progreſs which the goſpel ſhall make over the earth; and, finally, in my glorious appearance in the clouds of heaven at the laſt day, the ſign you have ſo often demanded in confirmation of my miſſion.

Upon our bleſſed Saviour's making this anſwer, a number of them cried out at once, as aſtoniſhed at the blaſphemy, *Art thou the ſon of God?* To which our great Redeemer replied, *Ye ſay that I am:* a manner of ſpeaking among the Jews, which expreſſed a plain and ſtrong affirmation of the thing expreſſed.

When the high prieſt heard this ſecond aſſertion, he rent his cloaths with great indignation, and ſaid unto the council, why need we trouble ourſelves to ſeek for any more witneſſes? Ye yourſelves, nay this whole aſſembly are witneſſes, that he hath

ſpoken manifeſt and notorious blaſphemy; what think ye? To which they all replied, that, for aſſuming to himſelf the character of the Meſſiah, he deſerved to be put to death.

Then began the ſervants and common people to fall upon him as a man already condemned; ſpitting upon him, buffeting him, offering him all manner of rudeneſs and indignities. They blindfolded him; and ſome of the council, in order to ridicule him for having pretended to be the great prophet, bid him exerciſe his prophetical gift, in declaring who had ſmote him.

Surely thoſe miſcreants could hardly invent any thing more expreſſive of the contempt, in which they held our great Redeemer's pretenſions to be the Meſſiah. Thus was the great judge of all the earth placed at the bar of frail mortals, falſely accuſed by the witneſſes, unjuſtly condemned by his judges, and barbarouſly inſulted by all. Yet, becauſe it was agreeable to the end of his coming, he patiently ſubmitted, though he could with a frown have made his judges, his accuſers, and thoſe who had him in cuſtody, to expire in a moment, or ſhrink into nothing.

CHAP. XXXVI.

Jeſus is brought before the governor. Judas hangs himſelf. Pilate refuſes to judge our bleſſed Saviour, declares him innocent, and ſends him to Herod.

THE Sanhedrim having thus condemned their Saviour, whom the whole nation had ſo long expected, conſulted together, and reſolved to carry him before the governor, that he likewiſe might paſs ſentence on him. The Roman governors of Judea generally reſided at Cæſarea; but at the great feaſts they came up to Jeruſalem, to prevent or ſuppreſs tumults, and to adminiſter juſtice; it being a cuſtom for the Roman governors of provinces to viſit the principal towns under their juriſdiction on this latter account. Pilate, being accordingly come to Jeruſalem ſome time before the feaſt, had been informed, probably by Joſeph of Arimathea, of the great ferment among the rulers, and the true character of the perſon on whoſe account it was raiſed; for he entertained a juſt notion of it: *He knew that for envy they had delivered him.* He knew the cauſe of their envy, was impreſſed with a favourable opinion of Jeſus, and wiſhed, if poſſible, to deliver him from his vile perſecutors.

Early in the morning the Jewiſh council brought Jeſus to the hall of judgment, or governor's palace. They themſelves, however, went not into the hall, but ſtood without, leſt they ſhould be defiled, and rendered incapable of eating the paſſover.

Now Judas Iſcariot, who had delivered his maſter into the hands of the council, finding his project turned out very different from what he expected, was filled with the deepeſt remorſe for what he had done. He ſaw all his golden dreams of temporal honours and advantages ſunk at once to nothing; he ſaw his kind, his

his indulgent maſter condemned, and forſaken by all his followers. He ſaw all this, and determined to make all the ſatisfaction in his power for the crime he had committed. Accordingly, he came and confeſſed openly, his ſin before the chief prieſts and elders, offered them the money they had given him to commit it, and earneſtly wiſhed he could recal the fatal tranſaction of the preceding night. It ſeems he thought this was the moſt public teſtimony he could poſſibly give of his maſter's innocence and his own repentance. I have, ſaid he, committed a moſt horrid crime, in betraying an innocent man to death.

But this moving ſpeech of Judas had no effect on the callous hearts of the Jewiſh rulers. They affirmed, that however he might think the priſoner innocent, and for that reaſon had ſinned in bringing the ſentence of death upon his head, they were not to blame; becauſe they knew him a blaſphemer, who deſerved to die. *What is that to us?* ſaid they, *ſee thou to that.* Nay, they even refuſed to take back the money they had given him as a reward for performing the baſe act of betraying his maſter.

Judas being thus convinced that it was not in his power to aſſiſt his Saviour, his conſcience being enraged, laſhed him more furiouſly than before, ſuggeſting thoughts which by turns made the deepeſt wounds in his ſoul. The innocence and benevolence of his maſter, the many favours he himſelf had received from him, and the many kind offices he had done for the ſons and daughters of affliction, crowded at once into his mind, and rendered his torment intolerable. He was, if I may be allowed the compariſon, like one placed on the brink of the infernal lake. Racked with theſe agonizing paſſions, and unable to ſupport the miſery, he threw down the wages of his iniquity in the temple; and confeſſing at the ſame time his own ſin, and the innocence of his maſter, went away in deſpair, and hanged himſelf. Thus periſhed Judas Iſcariot the traitor, a miſerable example of the fatal influence of covetouſneſs, and a ſtanding monument of divine vengeance to deter future generations from acting in oppoſition to the dictates of conſcience, through a love of the things of this world; for which, this wretched mortal betrayed his maſter, his friend, his Saviour, and accumulated ſuch a load of guilt on himſelf as ſunk his ſoul into the loweſt pit of perdition.

The pieces of ſilver caſt down by Judas were gathered up, and delivered to the prieſts, who thinking it unlawful to put them into the treaſury, becauſe they were the wages of a traitor, they agreed to lay them out in purchaſing the potter's-field, and to make it a common burial place for ſtrangers. This the Evangeliſt tells us was done, that a particular prophecy, relating to the Meſſiah, might be fulfilled: *And they took the thirty pieces of ſilver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Iſrael did value; and gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me.* This prophecy

is found in Zachariah; but by a miſtake of ſome copyiſt, the word Jeremy is inſerted in the Greek manuſcripts of St. Mathew's Goſpel; unleſs we ſuppoſe with the learned Grotius, that this remarkable prophecy was firſt made by Jeremiah, and afterwards repeated by the immediate direction of the ſpirit, by Zaccharіah; and that therefore the Evangeliſt has only aſcribed the prophecy to its original author. But however this be, the prophecy is remarkable, and was remarkably fulfilled. And the Evangeliſt, by thus appealing to a public tranſaction, puts the truth of this part of the hiſtory beyond all manner of exception.

I have already obſerved, that the chief prieſts and elders refuſed to go themſelves into the judgment-hall, leſt they ſhould contract ſome pollutions in the houſe of an heathen, which would have rendered them unfit for eating the paſſover. The ſame reaſon alſo hindered them from entering the governor's palace on other feſtivals, when that magiſtrate attended in order to adminiſter juſtice: a kind of ſtructure was therefore erected, adjoining to the palace, which ſerved inſtead of a tribunal or judgment-ſeat. This ſtructure, called in the Hebrew *Gabbatha*, was finely paved with ſmall pieces of marble of different colours, being always expoſed to the weather. Perhaps it reſembled a ſtage, but larger, open on all ſides, and on one part of it a throne was placed, whereon the governor ſat to hear cauſes. One ſide of this ſtructure joined to the palace, and a door was made in the wall, through which the governor paſſed to this tribunal. By this contrivance, the people might ſtand round the tribunal in the open air, hear and ſee the governor when he ſpake to them from the pavement, and obſerve the whole adminiſtration of juſtice, without danger of being defiled either by him or any of his retinue.

Before this tribunal the great Redeemer of mankind was brought, and the prieſts and elders having taken their places round the pavement, the governor aſcended the judgment-ſeat, and aſked them what accuſation they brought againſt the priſoner? Though nothing could be more natural than for the governor to aſk this queſtion, yet the Jews thought themſelves highly affronted by it. They probably knew his ſentiments concerning the priſoner, and therefore conſidered his queſtion as intended to inſinuate, that they brought one to be condemned, againſt whom they could find no accuſation. Pilate might indeed ſpeak to them in a ſtern manner, and by that means ſufficiently indicate his diſpleaſure. But however that be, the Jews haughtily anſwered, if he had not been a very great and extraordinary malefactor, we ſhould not have given you this trouble at all, much leſs at ſo unſeaſonable an hour.

Pilate then examined Jeſus; and finding he had not been guilty either of rebellion or ſedition, but that he was accuſed of particulars relating to the religion and cuſtoms of the Jews, grew angry and ſaid,

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What are theſe things to me? Take him yourſelves and judge him according to your own law. Plainly inſinuating, that in his opinion, the crime they laid to the priſoner's charge was not of a capital nature; and that ſuch puniſhments as they were permitted by Cæſar to inflict, were adequate to any miſdemeanor that Jeſus was charged with. But this propoſal of the Roman governor was abſolutely refuſed by the Jewiſh prieſts and elders, becauſe it condemned their whole proceeding; and therefore they anſwered, We have no power to put any one to death, as this man certainly deſerves, who has attempted not only to make innovations in our religion, but alſo ſet up himſelf for a king. This eagerneſs of the Jews to get Jeſus condemned by the Roman governor, who often ſentenced malefactors to be crucified, tended to fulfill the ſayings of our great Redeemer, who during the courſe of his miniſtry, had often mentioned what kind of death he was, by the counſel of Omnipotence, appointed to die.

Pilate finding it impoſſible to prevent a tumult, unleſs he proceeded to try Jeſus, aſcended again the judgment ſeat, and commanded his accuſers to produce their accuſations againſt him. Accordingly they accuſed him of ſeditious practices, affirming that he had uſed every method in his power to diſſuade the people from paying taxes to Cæſar, pretending that he himſelf was the Meſſiah, the great king of the Jews ſo long expected. But they brought no proof of this aſſertion. They only inſinuated, that they had already convicted him of this crime; which was abſolutely falſe. Pilate, however, asked him, Is it true, what theſe men lay to your charge, that you have indeed attempted to ſet up yourſelf as King of the Jews? To which Jeſus replied, have you ever during your ſtay in this province, heard any thing of me, that gave you any reaſon to ſuſpect me guilty of ſecret practices and ſeditious deſigns againſt the government? Or do you found your queſtion only on the preſent clamour and tumult that is raiſed againſt me? If this be the caſe, be very careful leſt you be impoſed on merely by the ambiguity of a word: for, to *be king of the Jews* is not to erect a temporal throne in oppoſition to that of Cæſar, but a thing of a very different nature; the kingdom of the Meſſiah is in the heavenly Canaan.

To which Pilate replied, Am I a Jew? Can I tell what your expectations are, and in what ſuperſtitious ſenſe you underſtand theſe words? The rulers and chiefs of your own people, who are the moſt proper judges of theſe particulars, have brought you before me, as a riotous and ſeditious perſon: if this be not the truth, let me know what is, and the crime thou haſt been guilty of.

Jeſus anſwered, I have indeed a kingdom, and this kingdom I have profeſſed to eſtabliſh. But then it is not of this world, nor has my endeavours to eſtabliſh it any tendency to cauſe diſturbances in the government. For, had that been the caſe, my

my ſervants would have fought for me, and not ſuffered me to have fallen into the hands of the Jews. But I tell you plainly, my kingdom is wholly ſpiritual, conſiſting only in the obedience of the wills and affections of men to the laws of the Almighty.

You acknowledge then in general, anſwered Pilate, that you have pretended to be a king? To which the bleſſed Jeſus replied, In the ſenſe I have told you I have declared, and do now declare myſelf to be a king. For this very end I was born, and for this purpoſe I came into the world, that I ſhould bear witneſs to the truth; and whoſoever ſincerely loves, and is always ready to embrace the truth, will hear my teſtimony and be convinced by it. Pilate anſwered, *What is truth?* And immediately went out to the Jews, and ſaid, unto them, I have again examined this man, but can find him guilty of no fault, which, according to the Roman law, is worthy of death.

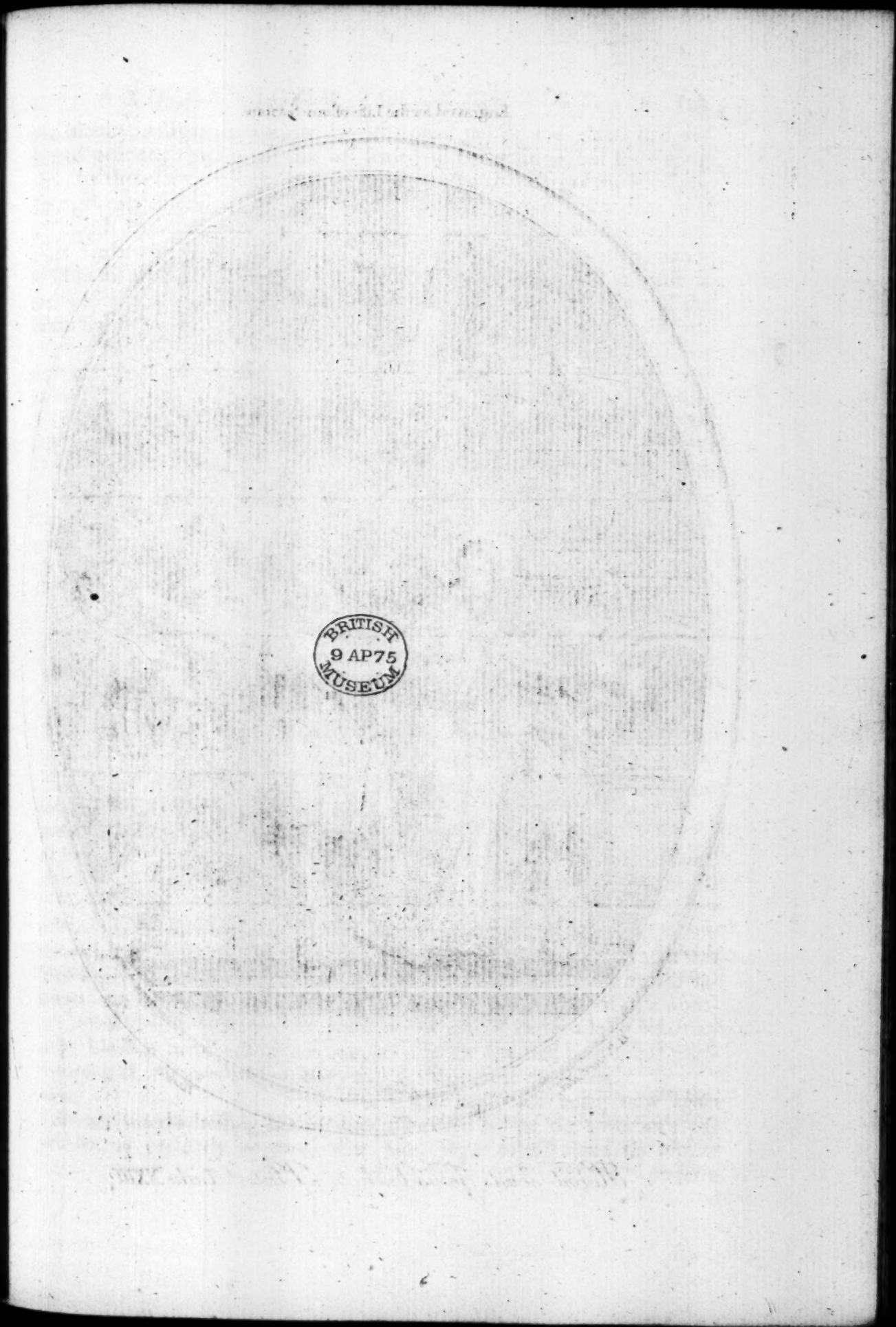
This generous declaration made by the governor, of the innocence of our bleſſed Saviour, had no effect on the ſuperſtitious and bigotted Jews. They even perſiſted in their accuſations with more vehemence than before, affirming that he had attempted to raiſe a ſedition in Galilee: *He ſtirreth up*, ſaid they, *the people, beginning from Galilee to this place.* Jeſus however made no anſwer at all to this heavy charge. Nay, he continued ſilent, notwithſtanding the governor himſelf expreſsly required him to ſpeak in his own defence. A conduct ſo extraordinary, in ſuch circumſtances, aſtoniſhed Pilate exceedingly; for he had great reaſon to be perſuaded of the innocence of our dear Redeemer. The truth is he was altogether ignorant of the divine counſel, by which the whole affair was directed.

There were many reaſons which induced the bleſſed Jeſus not to make a public defence. He came into the world purely to redeem loſt and undone mankind, by offering up himſelf a ſacrifice to appeaſe the wrath of his Almighty Father; but had he pleaded with his uſual force, the people had in all probability, been induced to ask his releaſe, and conſequently his death had been prevented. Beſides, the groſs falſhood of the accuſation known to all the inhabitants of Galilee, rendered any reply abſolutely needleſs.

In the mean time the chief prieſts continued to accuſe him with great noiſe and tumult. And the meek and humble Jeſus ſtill continuing mute, Pilate ſpake again to him, ſaying, Wilt thou continue to make no defence? Doſt thou not hear how vehemently theſe men accuſe thee?

But Pilate, recollecting what the chief prieſts had ſaid with regard to a ſedition in Galilee, asked if Jeſus came out of that country; and on being informed he did, he immediately ordered him to be carried to Herod, who was alſo then at Jeruſalem.

The governor ſuppoſed that Herod, in whoſe dominions the ſedition was ſaid to have been raiſed, muſt be a much better judge of the affair than himſelf. Beſides, his being a Jew rendered him more expert in the religion of his


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Herod sends Jesus back to Pilate. Luke XXIII.

own country, and gave him greater influence over the chief priests and elders; he therefore considered him as the most proper person to prevail on the Jewish council to desist from their cruel prosecution. But, if contrary to all human probability, he should, at their sollicitation, condemn Jesus, Pilate hoped to escape the guilt and infamy of putting an innocent person to death. He might also propose by this action to regain Herod's friendship, which he had formerly lost by incroaching, in all probability, on his privileges.

But however that be, or whatever motive induced Pilate to send our great Redeemer to Herod, the latter greatly rejoiced at this opportunity of seeing Jesus, hoping to have the pleasure of beholding him perform some great miracle. In this he was however mistaken; for as Herod had apostatized from the doctrine of John the Baptist, to which he was once a convert, and had even put his teacher to death, the blessed Jesus, however liberal of his miracles to the sons and daughters of affliction, would not work them to gratify the curiosity of a tyrant, nor even answer one of the many questions he proposed to him.

Herod, finding himself thus disappointed, ordered our blessed Saviour to be clothed with an old robe, resembling in colour those worn by kings, and permitted his attendants to insult him; perhaps to provoke him to work some miracle, though it should prove of a hurtful kind.

From Herod's dressing him in this manner, it evidently appears, that the chief priests and elders had accused him of nothing, but his having assumed the character of the Messiah, for the affront put upon him was plainly in derision of that pretension. The other head of accusation, namely, his having attempted to raise a sedition in Galilee, on account of the tribute paid to Cæsar, they did not dare to mention, as Herod could not fail of knowing it to be a gross and malicious falshood. And no crime worthy of death being laid to his charge, Herod sent him again to Pilate. It seems, that though he was displeased with the great Redeemer of mankind for refusing to work a miracle before him, yet he did not think proper to be unjust to him. Perhaps he was restrained by the remorse he felt on account of the death of John the Baptist.

CHAP. XXXVII.

Pilate offers three several times to release Jesus. Causes him to be mocked. And at last condemns him.

IT was customary at the passover, for the Roman governors to court the favour of the populace, by gratifying them with the release of any one prisoner they pleased. And at this feast there was one in prison named Barabbas, who, at the head of a number of rebels, had made an insurrection in the city, and committed murder during the confusion.

The multitude being now again assembled before the governor's palace, began to call aloud on him to perform

perform the annual office of mercy cuſtomary at that feſtival.

Pilate, glad of this opportunity, told them, that he was very willing to grant the favour they deſired; and aſked them whether they would have Barabbas or Jeſus releaſed unto them? But without waiting for an anſwer, he offered to releaſe Jeſus, knowing that the chief prieſts had delivered him through envy; eſpecially as Herod had not found him guilty of the crimes laid to his charge.

While theſe particulars were tranſacting, Pilate received a meſſage from his wife, then with him at Jeruſalem, and who had that morning been informed of ſomething in a dream which gave her great uneaſineſs. Perhaps it preſaged the vengeance of the Almighty purſuing her huſband and family on account of the injuſtice he was going to commit. But whatever the dream was, it had ſo great an effect on this Roman lady, that ſhe could not reſt till ſhe had ſent an account of it to her huſband, who was then ſitting on the tribunal in the pavement, and begged him to have no hand in the death of the righteous perſon he was then judging.

The people had not yet determined whether they would have Jeſus or Barabbas releaſed to them: therefore when Pilate received the meſſage from his wife, he called the chief prieſts and rulers together, and, in the hearing of the multitude, made a ſpeech to them, in which he gave them an account of the examination which Jeſus had undergone both at his own and Herod's tribunal, declaring that in both courts it had turned out honourably to his character; for which reaſon he propoſed to them, that he ſhould be the object of the people's favour.

Pilate did the prieſts the honour of deſiring to know their inclinations in particular, perhaps with a deſign to ſoften their ſtony hearts, and, if poſſible, to move them for once to pity an unhappy, an innocent man. But he was perſuaded that if pity was abſolutely baniſhed from their callous breaſts, his propoſal would have been acceptable to the people, whom he expected would embrace the firſt opportunity of declaring in his favour. Yet in this he was diſappointed. They cried out all at once, *Away with this man, and releaſe unto us Barabbas.* Ye apoſtate mortals, a few hours ago ye liſtened with rapture to his heavenly diſcourſes, beheld with tranſport the many ſalutary miracles wrought by this benevolent ſon of the moſt high, and earneſtly importuned him to take poſſeſſion of the throne and ſceptre of David! Now nothing will ſatiate your infernal malice but his precious blood! But remember ye miſcreants, ye monſters in the human form, that this ſame Jeſus, whom ye beheld with ſuch contempt before the tribunal of the Roman governor; this Jeſus whoſe blood your infernal mouths ſo loudly requeſted, ſhall one day come in the clouds of heaven to take vengeance on his enemies! And how will ye be able to bear the ſight of his appearance, when the very heavens themſelves will melt at his preſence,

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Jesus delivered to be scourged. John XIX. 1.

the ſun became black as ſackcloth of hair, the moon be turned into blood, and the ſtars fly from their ſpheres? How will ye then repent of your unjuſt demand, and call to the mountains and rocks to fall on you, and hide you from the preſence of that immaculate lamb of God, the tremendous judge of the whole earth!

Pilate himſelf was aſtoniſhed at this determination of the multitude, and repeated his queſtion; for he could hardly believe what he had himſelf heard. But on their again declaring that they deſired Barabbas might be releaſed, he aſked them what he ſhould do *with Jeſus*, which is called *Chriſt?* as if he had ſaid, you demand that Barabbas ſhould be releaſed; but what ſhall I then do with Jeſus? you cannot ſurely deſire me to crucify him, whom ſo many of you have acknowledged as your Meſſiah? *But they cried, ſaying, crucify him, crucify him. Then Pilate ſaith unto them, why, what evil hath he done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, crucify him.*

They were ſo reſolutely determined to have him deſtroyed, that notwithſtanding the governor urged them again and again to deſire his releaſe, declared his innocence, and offered ſeveral times to diſmiſs him, they would not hear it, uttering their rage, ſometimes in hollow diſtant, inarticulate murmurs, and ſometimes in furious outcries: to ſuch a pitch were their paſſions raiſed by the craft and artful inſinuations of their prieſts.

Pilate, finding it therefore in vain to ſtruggle with their prejudices, called for water, and waſhed his hands before the multitude, crying out at the ſame time, that the priſoner had no fault, and that he himſelf was innocent of his blood.

By this action and declaration, Pilate ſeems to have intended to make impreſſion on the Jewiſh populace, by complying with the inſtitutions of Moſes, which orders, in caſe of an unknown murder, the elders of the neareſt city to waſh their hands publicly, and ſay, *Our hands have not ſhed this blood.* And in alluſion to this law, the Pſalmiſt ſays, *I will waſh mine hands in innocence.* According therefore to the Jewiſh rites, Pilate made the moſt ſolemn and public declaration of the innocence of our dear Redeemer, and of his reſolution of having no hand in his death. Perhaps he flattered himſelf that by this ſolemn appeal, he ſhould have terrified the Jewiſh populace; for a perſon of his underſtanding and education could not but be ſenſible, that all the water in the univerſe was not ſufficient to waſh away the guilt of an unrighteous ſentence.

But notwithſtanding the ſolemnity of this declaration, the Jews continued inflexible, and cried out, with one voice, *His blood be on us and our children.* Dreadful imprecation! It ſhocks humanity! An imprecation which brought on them the dreadful vengeance of Omnipotence, and is ſtill a heavy burden on that perfidious people!

The governor finding it impoſſible to alter their choice, releaſed unto them Barabbas. And as it was the general practice of the Romans to

ſcourge thoſe criminals they condemned to be crucified, Pilate ordered the bleſſed Jeſus to be ſcourged before he delivered him to the ſoldiers to be put to death.

The ſoldiers having ſcourged Jeſus, and received orders to crucify him, carried him into the Prætorium or common-hall, where they added the ſhame of diſgrace to the bitterneſs of his puniſhment; for ſore as he was by reaſon of the ſtripes they had given him, they dreſſed him in a purple robe, in deriſion of his being king of the Jews. Having dreſſed him in this robe of mock-majeſty, they put a reed in his hand, inſtead of a ſceptre, and after platting a wreath of thorns, they put it on his head for a crown; forcing it down in ſo rude a manner, that his temples were torn, and his face beſmeared with his moſt precious blood. To the Son of God in this condition, the rude ſoldiers bowed the knee, pretending to do it out of reſpect; but, at the ſame time gave him ſevere blows on the head, which drove the prickles of the wreath afreſh into his temples, then ſpit on him to expreſs their higheſt contempt.

The governor, whoſe office obliged him to be preſent at this ſhocking ſcene of inhumanity, was ready to burſt with grief. The ſight of an innocent and virtuous man treated with ſuch ſhocking barbarity, raiſed in his breaſt the moſt painful ſenſations of pity. And though he had given ſentence that it ſhould be as the Jews deſired, and had delivered our dear Redeemer to the ſoldiers to be crucified, he was perſuaded, that if he ſhewed him to the people in that condition, they muſt relent, and petition him to let him go. Filled with this thought he reſolved to carry him out, and exhibit to their view a ſpectacle capable of ſoftening the moſt envenomed, obdurate, enraged enemy. And, in order to render the impreſſion ſtill more poignant, he went out himſelf, and ſaid unto them, Though I have ſentenced this man to die, and have ſcourged him as one that is to be crucified, yet I once more bring him before you, that I may again teſtify how fully I am perſwaded of his innocence; and that ye may yet have an opportunity of ſaving his life.

As ſoon as the governor had finiſhed his ſpeech, Jeſus appeared on the pavement, his hair, his face, his ſhoulders all clotted with blood, and the purple robe bedaubed with ſpittle. And that the ſight of Jeſus in this diſtreſs might make the greater impreſſion on the people, Pilate, while he was coming forward, cried out, *Behold the man!* As if he had ſaid, will nothing make you relent? Have ye loſt all the feeling of humanity, and bowels of compaſſion? Can you bear to ſee the innocent, a ſon of Abraham, thus injured? Perhaps, alſo the ſoldiers were ſuffered to buffet Jeſus again on the pavement before the multitude, in order to excite their pity, or at leaſt their pride: for though they might not pity Jeſus as a perſon unjuſtly condemned; yet when they ſaw one of their countrymen inſulted by heathens, it was natural for the governor to ſuppoſe,

Engraved for the Life of our Saviour.



Christ Scourged. John XIX.

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poſe, that their national pride being provoked would have induced them to have demanded his releaſe.

But all this was to no purpoſe. The prieſts, whoſe rage and malice had extinguiſhed not only the ſentiments of juſtice and feelings of pity natural to the human heart, but alſo that love which countrymen bear for each other, no ſooner ſaw Jeſus than they began to fear the fickle populace might relent: and therefore, laying decency aſide, they led the way to the multitude, crying out with all their might, Crucify him! crucify him!

Pilate, vexed to ſee the Jewiſh rulers thus obſtinately bent on the deſtruction of a perſon from whom they had nothing to fear that was dangerous either with regard to their church or ſtate, paſſionately told them that if they would have him crucified, they muſt do it themſelves; becauſe he would not ſuffer his people to murder a man who was guilty of no crime.

But this they alſo refuſed, thinking it diſhonourable to receive permiſſion to puniſh a perſon who had been more than once publicly declared innocent by his judge. Beſides they conſidered with themſelves, that the governor might afterwards have called it ſedition, as the permiſſion had been extorted from him. Accordingly they told him, that even though none of the things alledged againſt the priſoner were true, he had committed ſuch a crime in preſence of the council itſelf, as by their law deſerved the moſt ignominious death. He had ſpoken blaſphemy, calling himſelf the Son of God, a title which no mortal could aſſume without the higheſt degree of guilt: *We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, becauſe he made himſelf the Son of God.*

When Pilate heard that Jeſus called himſelf the Son of God, his fear was increaſed. Knowing the obſtinacy of the Jews in all matters of religion, he was afraid they would make a tumult in earneſt; or, perhaps he was himſelf more afraid than ever to take away his life, becauſe he ſuſpected it might be true. He doubtleſs remembered the miracles ſaid to have been performed by Jeſus, and therefore ſuſpected that he really was the Son of God. For it is well known that the religion which the governor profeſſed, directed him to acknowledge the exiſtence of demigods and heroes, or men deſcended from the Gods. Nay, the heathens believed, that their Gods themſelves ſometimes appeared upon earth in the form of men.

Reflections of this kind induced Pilate to go again into the judgment-hall, and aſk Jeſus from what father he ſprung, and from what county he came? But our bleſſed Saviour gave him no anſwer, leſt the governor ſhould reverſe his ſentence, and abſolutely refuſe to crucify him. Pilate marvelled greatly at this ſilence, and ſaid unto Jeſus, Why doſt thou refuſe to anſwer me? You cannot be ignorant that I am inveſteſt with abſolute power, either to releaſe or crucify you. To which Jeſus anſwered, I well know that you are Cæſar's ſervant, and account-

able to him for your management. I forgive you any injury, which, contrary to your inclination, the popular fury conſtrains you to do unto me. Thou haſt thy power *from above*, from the emperor: for which cauſe, the Jewiſh high prieſt, who hath put me into thy hands, and by pretending that I am Cæſar's enemy, forces thee to condemn me; or if thou refuſeſt, will accuſe thee as negligent of the emperor's intereſt; he is more guilty than thou. *He that delivered me unto thee hath the greater ſin.*

This ſweet and modeſt anſwer made ſuch an impreſſion on Pilate, that he went out to the people, and declared his intention of releaſing Jeſus whether they gave their conſent or not. Upon which the chief prieſts and rulers of Iſrael cried out, *If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæſar's friend: whoſoever maketh himſelf a king, ſpeaketh againſt Cæſar.* If thou releaſeſt the priſoner, who hath ſet himſelf up for a king, and endeavoured to raiſe a rebellion in the country, thou art unfaithful to the intereſt of the emperor thy maſter. This argument was weighty, and ſhook Pilate's reſolution to the very baſis. He was terrified at the thought of being accuſed to Tiberius, who in all affairs of government always ſuſpected the worſt, and puniſhed the moſt minute crimes relative thereto with death.

The governor being thus conſtrained to yield, contrary to his inclination, was very angry with the prieſts for ſtirring up the people to ſuch a pitch of madneſs, and determined to affront them. He therefore brought Jeſus out a ſecond time into the pavement, wearing the purple robe and the crown of thorns; and, pointing to him, ſaid, *Behold your king*; ridiculing the national expectation of a Meſſiah.

This ſarcaſtical expreſſion ſtung them to the quick, and they cried out *Away with him, away with him, crucify him.* To which Pilate anſwered, with the ſame mocking air, *Shall I crucify your king? The chief prieſts anſwered, We have no king but Cæſar.* Thus did they publicly renounce their hope of the Meſſiah, which the whole œconomy of their religion had been calculated to cheriſh: they alſo publicly acknowledged their ſubjection to the Romans; and, conſequently, condemned themſelves, when they afterwards rebelled againſt the emperor.

I cannot help obſerving here, that the great unwillingneſs of the governor to paſs ſentence of death upon Jeſus, has ſomething in it very remarkable. For from the character of Pilate, as drawn by the Roman hiſtorians themſelves, he ſeems to have been far from poſſeſſing any true principle of virtue. To what then could it be owing, that ſo wicked a man ſhould ſo ſteadily adhere to the cauſe of innocence, which he defended with uncommon bravery, and perhaps would never have abandoned it, had he not been forced by the threatnings of the chief prieſts and rulers of Iſrael? And when he did yield, and paſſed ſentence of death upon our dear Redeemer, why did he ſtill declare him innocent?

This can certainly be attributed to no other cauſe than to the ſecret but powerful direction of the providence of the Almighty, who intended that at the ſame time his ſon was condemned and executed as a malefactor, his innocence ſhould be made appear in the moſt public manner, and by the moſt authentic evidence; even that of the judge himſelf. It was the power of the Almighty that ſet bounds to the inveterate malice and fury of the Jews, that would not ſuffer them to ſtain the innocence of the bleſſed Jeſus, at the ſame time, they deprived him of his life; but ſaid to their boiſterous malice, as he had before ſaid to the foaming billows of the ocean, *Hitherto ſhalt thou come and no farther, and here ſhall thy proud waves be ſtayed.*

CHAP. XXXVIII.

Jeſus is led forth to Calvary, and crucified between two thieves. A title is put on the croſs, and lots caſt for his garment. The multitude, the rulers, the prieſts, and the ſoldiers revile Jeſus. The great and unnatural eclipſe of the ſun. Jeſus ſpeaks to his friends from the croſs, and expires.

COME my ſoul, and follow thy Redeemer to the laſt ſcene of the moſt innocent and uſeful courſe, that was ever paſſed on earth. Follow him to Calvary's horrid eminence; to Calvary's fatal cataſtrophe. There fix thy moſt conſtant attention on that lovely, that ſorrowful ſpectacle. Behold the ſpotleſs victim nailed to a tree, and ſtabbed to the heart. Hear him pouring out prayers for his murderers, before he poured out his ſoul for tranſgreſſors. See the wounds that ſtream with forgiveneſs, and bleed balm for a diſtempered world. O! ſee the juſtice and goodneſs of the Almighty, his mercy and his vengeance; all his tremendous and gracious attributes manifeſted; manifeſted with inexpreſſible ſplendor, in the moſt ignominious, and yet grandeſt of tranſactions!

Sentence being pronounced againſt the bleſſed Jeſus, the ſoldiers were ordered to prepare for his execution, a command which they readily obeyed, and after clothing him in his own garments, led him away to crucify him. It is not ſaid that they took the crown of thorns from his temples; probably he died wearing it, that the title placed over his head might be the better underſtood.

It is not to be expected that the miniſters of Jewiſh malice remitted any of the circumſtances of affliction, which were ever laid on perſons condemned to be crucified. Accordingly Jeſus was obliged to walk on foot to the place of execution, bearing his croſs. But the fatigue of the preceding night ſpent without ſleep, the ſufferings he had undergone in the garden; his having been hurried from place to place, and obliged to ſtand the whole time of his trials; the want of food, and the loſs of blood he had ſuſtained, and not his want of courage on this occaſion, made him faint under the burden of his

his croſs. The ſoldiers, ſeeing him unable to bear the weight, laid it on one Simon, a native of Cyrene in Egypt, the father of Alexander and Rufus, well known among the firſt chriſtians, and forced him to bear it after the great Redeemer of mankind. The ſoldiers did not however do this out of compaſſion to the ſuffering Jeſus, but to prevent his dying with the fatigue, and by that means eluding his puniſhment.

The bleſſed Jeſus, in this journey to Calvary, was followed by an innumerable multitude of people, particularly of women, who lamented bitterly the ſeverity of his ſentence, and ſhewed all the tokens of ſincere compaſſion and grief. Jeſus, who always felt the woes of others more than he did his own, forgetting his diſtreſs at the very time when it lay heavieſt upon him, turned himſelf about, and, with a benevolence and tenderneſs truly divine, ſaid to them, *Daughters of Jeruſalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourſelves and for your children. For behold the days are coming, in the which they ſhall ſay, bleſſed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps that never gave ſuck. Then ſhall they begin to ſay to the mountains, fall on us, and to the hills cover us. For if they do theſe things in a green tree what ſhall be done in the dry?* As if he had ſaid, Dry up theſe tears, ye daughters of Jeruſalem, which ye ſhed in compaſſion to me, and reſerve them for the deplorable fate of yourſelves and of your children; for the calamities that will ſoon fall on you and your offſpring, are truly terrible, and call for the bittereſt lamentations. In thoſe days of vengeance you will paſſionately wiſh that you had not given birth to a generation, whoſe wickedneſs has rendered them the objects of the wrath of the Almighty to ſuch a degree as was never before experienced in the world. Then ſhall they wiſh to be cruſhed under the weight of enormous mountains, and concealed from their enemies in the bowels of the hills. The thoughts of theſe calamities afflict my ſoul far more than the feeling of my own ſufferings. For if the Romans are permitted to inflict ſuch puniſhments on me who am innocent, how dreadful muſt the vengeance be which they ſhall inflict on a nation whoſe ſins cry aloud to heaven, haſtening the pace of the divine judgments, and rendering the perpetrators as proper for puniſhment as dry wood is for the flames!

Being arrived at the place of execution, which was called Golgotha, or the place of a ſkull, from the criminals bones which lay ſcattered there, ſome of our Redeemer's friends offered him a ſtupifying potion, to render him inſenſible to the ignominy and excruciating pain of his puniſhment. But as ſoon as he taſted the potion he refuſed to drink it, being determined to bear his ſufferings, however ſharp, not by intoxicating and ſtupifying himſelf, but by the ſtrength of patience, fortitude, and faith.

Jeſus having refuſed the potion, the ſoldiers began to execute their orders by ſtripping him quite naked, and in that condition began to faſten him

him to his croſs. But while they were piercing his hands and his feet with nails, inſtead of crying out through the ſharpneſs of the pain, he calmly, though fervently prayed for them, and for all thoſe who had any hand in his death; beſeeching the Almighty to forgive them, and excuſing them himſelf by the only circumſtance that could alleviate their guilt; I mean, their ignorance. *Father*, ſaid the compaſſionate Redeemer of mankind, *forgive them, for they know not what they do.* This was infinite meekneſs and goodneſs, truly worthy of the only begotten ſon of God; an example of forgiveneſs, which, though it can never be equalled by any, ſhould be imitated by all.

But behold the appointed ſoldiers dig the hole in which the croſs was to be erected. The croſs is placed in the ground, and the bleſſed Jeſus lies on the bed of ſorrows. They nail him to it. They erect it. His nerves crack. His blood diſtils. He hangs upon his wounds naked, a ſpectacle to heaven and earth. Thus was the only begotten ſon of God, who came down from heaven to ſave the world, crucified by his own creatures; and to render the ignominy ſtill greater, placed between two thieves. *Hear, O heavens! O earth, earth, earth hear! The Lord hath nouriſhed and brought up children, and they have rebelled againſt him.*

It was uſual for the crimes committed by malefactors to be written on a white board with black, and placed over their heads on the croſs. In conformity to this cuſtom, Pilate wrote a title in the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin languages that all, foreigners as well as natives, might be able to read it, and faſtened it to the croſs, over the head of Jeſus; and the inſcription was *Jeſus of Nazareth the king of the Jews.* But when the chief prieſts and elders had read this title they were greatly diſpleaſed: becauſe as it repreſented the crime for which Jeſus was condemned, it inſinuated that he had been acknowledged for the Meſſiah. Beſides, being placed over the head of one who was dying by the moſt infamous puniſhment, it implied that all who attempted to deliver the Jews ſhould periſh in the ſame manner. The faith and hope of the nation therefore being thus publicly ridiculed, it is no wonder that the prieſts thought themſelves highly affronted; and accordingly came to Pilate begging that the writing might be altered. But as he had intended the affront in revenge for their forcing him to crucify Jeſus contrary both to his judgment and inclination, he refuſed to grant their requeſt. *What I have written*, ſaid he, *I have written.*

When the ſoldiers had nailed the bleſſed Jeſus to the croſs, and erected it, they divided his garments among them. But his coat, or veſture, being without ſeam, woven from the top throughout, they agreed not to rend it, but to caſt lots for it, that the prediction of the prophet concerning the death and ſufferings of the Meſſiah might be fulfilled. *They parted my garments among them, and for my veſture did they caſt lots.* A ſufficient indication that every circumſtance

cumſtance of the death and paſſion of the bleſſed Jeſus was long before determined in the court of heaven; and accordingly his being crucified between two malefactors was expreſsly foretold, *And he was numbered with the tranſgreſſors.*

The common people, whom the vile prieſts had incenſed againſt the bleſſed Jeſus, by the malicious falſehoods they had ſpread concerning him, and which they pretended to found on the depoſition of witneſſes; the common people, I ſay, ſeeing him hang in ſo infamous a manner upon the croſs, and reading the inſcription that was placed over his head, expreſſed their indignation againſt him by ſarcaſtical expreſſions, *Ah, thou,* ſaid they, *that deſtroyeſt the temple, and buildeſt it in three days, ſave thyſelf and come down from the croſs.*

But the common people were not the only perſons who mocked and derided the bleſſed Jeſus, while he was ſuffering to obtain the remiſſion of the ſins of all mankind. The rulers, who now imagined they had effectually deſtroyed his pretenſions to the character of the Meſſiah, joined the populace, in ridiculing him, and with a meanneſs of ſoul, which many infamous wretches would have ſcorned, mocked him, even while he was ſtruggling with the agonies of death. They ſcoffed at the miracles by which he demonſtrated himſelf to be the Meſſiah, and promiſed to believe in him, on condition of his proving his pretenſions by deſcending from the croſs. *He ſaved others;* ſaid they, *himſelf he cannot ſave: if he be the king of Iſrael, let him now come down from the croſs, and we will believe him.*

In the mean time nothing could be more falſe and hypocritical than this pretenſion of the ſtiff-necked Jews: for they continued in their unbelief, notwithſtanding they well knew that he raiſed himſelf from the dead; a much greater miracle than his coming down from the croſs would have been; a miracle atteſted by witneſſes whoſe veracity they could not call in queſtion. It was told them by the ſoldiers whom they themſelves placed at the ſepulchre to watch the body, and who they were obliged to bribe largely to conceal the truth. It is therefore abundantly evident, that if the bleſſed Jeſus had deſcended from the croſs, the Jewiſh prieſts would have continued in their infidelity; and conſequently that their declaration was made with no other intention than to inſult the Redeemer of mankind, thinking it impoſſible for him now to eſcape out of their hands.

The ſoldiers alſo joined in this general ſcene of mockery, *If thou be the king of the Jews,* ſaid they, *ſave thyſelf.* If thou art the great Meſſiah expected by the Jews, deſcend from the croſs by miracle, and deliver thyſelf from theſe excruciating torments.

Nor could even one of the thieves forbear mocking the great Lord of heaven and earth, though labouring himſelf under the moſt racking pains, and ſtruggling with the agonies of death. But the other exerciſed a moſt extraordinary faith, at a time when our great Redeemer was deſerted

ſerted by his father, mocked by men, and hanged upon the croſs, as the moſt ignominious of malefactors. This Jewiſh criminal ſeems to have entertained a more rational and exalted notion of the Meſſiah's kingdom, than even the diſciples themſelves. They expected nothing but a ſecular empire: he gave ſtrong intimations of his having an idea of Chriſt's ſpiritual dominion; for at the very time when Jeſus was dying on the croſs, he begged to be remembered by him when he came into his kingdom. *Lord*, ſaid he, *remember me, when thou comeſt into thy kingdom.* Nor did he make this requeſt in vain: the great Redeemer of mankind anſwered him, *Verily, I ſay unto thee, to-day ſhalt thou be with me in Paradiſe.*

But let us attentively conſider the hiſtory of our bleſſed Saviour's paſſion, as it offers to our view events abſolutely aſtoniſhing. For when we remember the perfect innocence of our great Redeemer, the uncommon love he bore to the children of men, and the many kind and benevolent offices he did for the ſons and daughters of affliction; when we reflect on the eſteem in which he was held all along by the common people, how chearfully they followed him to the remoteſt corners of the country, nay even into the deſolate retreats of the wilderneſs, and with what pleaſure they liſtened to his diſcourſes; when we conſider theſe particulars, I ſay, we cannot help being aſtoniſhed to find them at the concluſion ruſhing all of a ſudden into the oppoſite extremes, and every individual as it were combined to treat him with the moſt barbarous cruelty.

When Pilate aſked the people if they deſired to have Jeſus releaſed, his diſciples, though they were very numerous, and might have made a great appearance in his behalf, remained abſolutely ſilent, as if they had been ſpeechleſs or infatuated. The Roman ſoldiers, notwithſtanding their general had declared him innocent, inſulted him in the moſt inhuman manner. The ſcribes and Phariſees ridiculed him. The common people, who had received him with Hoſannas a few days before, wagged their heads at him as they paſſed by, and railed on him as a deceiver. Nay, the very thief on the croſs reviled him.

This ſudden revolution in the humours of the whole nation may ſeem unaccountable. But if we could aſſign a proper reaſon for the ſilence of the diſciples, the principles which influenced the reſt might be diſcovered in their ſeveral ſpeeches. The followers of the bleſſed Jeſus had attached themſelves to him in expectation of being raiſed to great wealth and power in his kingdom, which they expected would have been eſtabliſhed long before this time. But ſeeing no appearance at all of what they had ſo long hoped for, they permitted him to be condemned, perhaps becauſe they thought it would have obliged him to break the Roman yoke by miracle.

With reſpect to the ſoldiers they were angry that any one ſhould pretend to royalty in Judea, where

Cæſar had eſtabliſhed his authority. Hence they inſulted our bleſſed Saviour with the title of king, and paid him, in mockery, the honours of a ſovereign.

As for the common people, they ſeem to have loſt their opinion of him, probably becauſe he had neither convinced the council, nor reſcued himſelf when they condemned him. They began therefore to conſider the ſtory of his pretending to deſtroy the temple and build it in three days, as a kind of blaſphemy, becauſe it required divine power to execute ſuch an undertaking.

The prieſts and ſcribes were filled with the moſt implacable and diabolical malice againſt him; becauſe he had torn off their maſks of hypocriſy, and ſhewed them to the people in their true colours. It is therefore no wonder that they ridiculed his miracles from whence he derived his reputation.

In ſhort, the thief alſo fancied that he muſt have delivered both himſelf and them, if he had been the Meſſiah; but as no ſuch deliverance appeared, he upbraided him for making pretenſions to that high character.

But now my ſoul take one view of thy dying Saviour, breathing out his ſoul upon the croſs! Behold his unſpotted fleſh lacerated with ſtripes, by which thou art healed! See his hands extended and nailed to the croſs; thoſe beneficent hands, which were inceſſantly ſtretched out to unlooſe the heavy burdens, and to impart bleſſings of every kind! Behold his feet rivetted to the accurſed tree with nails: thoſe feet which always went about doing good, and travelled far and near to ſpread the glad tidings of everlaſting ſalvation! View his tender temples incircled with a wreath of thorns, which ſhoot their keen afflictive points into his bleſſed head; that head which was ever meditating peace to poor loſt and undone ſinners, and ſpent many a wakeful night in ardent prayers for their happineſs! See him labouring in the agonies of death! breathing out his ſoul into the hands of his Almighty Father, and praying for his cruel enemies! Was ever love like this! was ever benevolence ſo finely diſplayed! O my ſoul put thou thy truſt in that bleeding, that dying Saviour! then, though the peſtilence walketh in darkneſs, and the ſickneſs deſtroyeth at noon-day; though thouſands fall beſides thee, and ten thouſands at thy right hand, thou needeſt not fear the approach of any evil! Either the deſtroying angel ſhall paſs over thee, or diſpenſe the corrections of a friend, not the ſcourges of an enemy, which inſtead of hurting will work for thy good. Then though profaneneſs and infidelity, far more malignant evils, breathe their contagion, and taint the morals of multitudes around thee, thou ſhalt be ſafely hid in the hollow of his hand, and freed from every danger.

Come then my ſoul let us take ſanctuary under that tree of life, the ignominious croſs of thy bleeding Saviour; let us fly for ſafety to that city of refuge opened in his bleeding wounds. Theſe will prove a ſacred hiding-

hiding-place, not to be pierced by the flames of divine wrath, or the fiery darts of temptation. His dying merits, his perfect obedience will be *as rivers of water in a dry place*, or *as the ſhadow of a great rock in a weary land.*

But particularly in that laſt tremendous day, when the heaven ſhall be rent aſunder, and wrapped up like a ſcroll: when his Almighty arm ſhall arreſt the ſun in his carreer, and daſh the ſtructure of the univerſe to pieces: when the dead both ſmall and great ſhall be gathered before the throne of his glory, and the fates of all mankind hang on the very point of a final irreverſible deciſion: then, if thou haſt faithfully truſted in him, and made his precepts thy conſtant directors, ſhalt thou be owned and defended by him. O! reader, may both thou that peruſeth, and him who hath written this for thy ſoul's advantage, be covered at that unutterably important juncture, by the wings of his redeeming love; then ſhall we behold all the horrible convulſions of expiring nature with compoſure, with comfort! we ſhall even welcome the conſummation of all things, as the *times of refreſhing from the preſence of the Lord.*

But ſee the ſun, conſcious of the ſufferings of his maker, and as it were to hide his face from this deteſtible action of mortals, is wrapped in the pitchy mantle of chaotic darkneſs! This preternatural eclipſe of the ſun continued for three hours to the great terror and aſtoniſhment of the people preſent at the execution of our dear Redeemer. And ſurely nothing could be more proper than this extraordinary alteration in the face of nature, while the ſun of righteouſneſs was withdrawing his beams, not only from the promiſed land, but from the whole world; for it was at once a miraculous teſtimony given by the Almighty himſelf to the innocence of his ſon, and a proper emblem of the departure of him who was the light of the world, at leaſt till his luminous rays, like the beams of the morning, ſhone out anew with additional ſplendor in the miniſtry of his apoſtles.

Nor was the darkneſs which now covered Judea and the neighbouring countries, beginning about noon and continuing till Jeſus expired, the effect of an ordinary eclipſe of the ſun. It is well known that theſe phænomena can only happen at the change of the moon; whereas the Jewiſh paſſover, at which our dear Redeemer ſuffered, was always celebrated at the full. Beſides, the total darkneſs of an eclipſe of the ſun never exceeds twelve or fifteen minutes, whereas this continued three full hours. Nothing therefore but the immediate hand of that Almighty Being which placed the ſun in the centre of the planetary ſyſtem, could have produced this aſtoniſhing darkneſs. Nothing but Omnipotence, who firſt lighted this glorious luminary of heaven, could have deprived it of its chearing rays. Now ye ſcoffers of Iſrael, whoſe blood have ye ſo earneſtly deſired, and wiſhed it might fall upon you and your children! behold all nature is dreſt in the

the ſable veil of ſorrow, and in a language that cannot be miſtaken, mourns the departure of its Lord and maſter; weeps for your crime, and deprecates the vengeance of heaven upon your guilty heads! Happy for you that this ſuffering Jeſus is compaſſion itſelf, and even in the agonies of death prays to his heavenly Father to avert from you the ſtroke of his juſtice!

This preternatural eclipſe of the ſun was conſidered as a miracle by the heathens themſelves; and one of them cried out, *Either the world is at an end, or the God of nature ſuffers!* and well might he uſe the expreſſion; for never ſince this planetary ſyſtem was called from its primitive chaos was known ſuch a deprivation of light in the glorious luminary of day. Indeed, when the Almighty puniſhed Pharoah for refuſing to let the children of Iſrael depart out of his land, the ſable veil of darkneſs was for three days drawn over Egypt. But this darkneſs was confined to a part of that kingdom; whereas, this that happenned at our Saviour's crucifixion was univerſal.

When the darkneſs began, the diſciples naturally conſidered it as a prelude to the deliverance of their maſter. For though the chief prieſts, elders, and people, had ſarcaſtically deſired him to deſcend from the accurſed tree, his friends could not but be perſuaded, that he who had delivered ſo many from incurable diſeaſes, who had created limbs for the maimed, and eyes for the blind; who had given ſpeech to the dumb, and called the dead from the chambers of the duſt, might eaſily ſave himſelf, even from the croſs.

When, therefore, his mother, his mother's ſiſter, Mary Magdalene, and the beloved diſciple obſerved the veil of darkneſs begin to extend over the face of nature, they drew near to the foot of the croſs, probably in expectation that the ſon of God was going to ſhake the frame of the univerſe, unlooſe himſelf from the croſs, and take ample vengeance on his cruel and perfidious enemies.

The bleſſed Jeſus was now in the midſt of his ſufferings. Yet when he ſaw his mother and her companions, their grief greatly affected his tender breaſt, eſpecially the diſtreſs of his mother. The agonies of death, under which he was now labouring, could not prevent his expreſſing the moſt affectionate regard both for her and for them. For that ſhe might have ſome conſolation to ſupport her under the greatneſs of her ſorrows, he told her, the diſciple whom he loved would, for the ſake of that love, ſupply his place to her after he was taken from them, even the place of a ſon: and therefore, he deſired her to conſider him as ſuch, and expect from him all the duties of a child. *Woman*, ſaid he, *behold thy ſon.*

Nor was this remarkable token of filial affection towards his mother, the only inſtance the dying Jeſus gave of his ſincere love for his friends and followers: the beloved diſciple had alſo a token of his high eſteem. He ſingled him out as the only perſon among his friends to ſupply his place with regard to his mother. Accordingly

ingly he desired him expressly to reverence her in the same manner as if she had been his own parent. A duty which the favourite disciple gladly undertook, carried her with him to his house, and maintained her from that hour to the day of her death; her husband Joseph, having, it seems, been dead some time.

Thus in the midst of the heaviest sufferings that human nature ever sustained, the blessed Jesus demonstrated a divine strength of benevolence. Even at the time when his own distress was at the highest pitch, and nature was dressed in the robe of mourning for the sufferings of her great Creator; his friends had so large a share of his concern, that their happiness interrupted the sharpness of his pains, and for a short time engrossed his thoughts.

But now the moment when he should resign his soul into the hands of his heavenly father approached, and he repeated part, at least, of the twenty-second Psalm, uttering with a loud voice these remarkable words, *Eli, Eli, lama, sabachthani?* that is, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Or as the words may be rendered, *My God, my God, how long a time hast thou forsaken me!*

Some believe that our blessed Saviour repeated the whole Psalm; it being the custom of the Jews in making quotations, to mention only the first words of the Psalm or Section which they cite. If so, as this Psalm contains the most remarkable particulars of our dear Redeemer's passion, being as it were a summary of all the prophecies relative to that subject, by repeating it on the cross, the blessed Jesus signified that he was now accomplishing the things that were predicted concerning the Messiah. And as the psalm is composed in the form of a prayer, by pronouncing it at this time, he also claimed of his father the performance of all the promises he had made, whether to him or to his people; the chief of which are recorded in the latter part of the Psalm.

Some of the people who stood by when they heard our blessed Saviour pronounce the first words of this Psalm, they misunderstood him; probably from their not hearing him distinctly, and concluded that he called for Elias. Upon which one of them filled a spunge with vinegar, put it on a reed, and gave him to drink; being desirous of keeping him alive as long as possible, to see whether Elias would come to take him down from the cross.

But as soon as Jesus had tasted the vinegar, *he said it is finished.* That is, the work of man's redemption is accomplished: that great work which the only begotten Son of God came into the world to perform is finished. In speaking these words, he cried with an exceeding loud voice; and after the shout, he addressed his Almighty Father in words which form the best pattern of a recommendatory prayer at the hour of death, *Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.* And having uttered these words, *he bowed his head and yielded up the ghost.*

But behold! at the very inſtant that the bleſſed Jeſus reſigned his ſoul into the hands of his heavenly father, the vail of the temple was miraculouſly rent from the top to the bottom, probably in the preſence of the prieſt who burnt incenſe in the holy place, and who doubtleſs publiſhed the account when he came out: for our bleſſed Saviour expired at the ninth hour, the very time of offering the evening ſacrifice.

Nor was this the only miracle that happened at the death of the great Meſſiah; no, the earth trembled from its very foundations, the flinty rocks burſt aſunder, and the ſepulchres hewn in them were opened; and many bodies of ſaints depoſited there, awaked after his reſurrection from the ſleep of death, left the gloomy chambers of the tomb, went into the city of Jeruſalem, and appeared unto many.

In all probability theſe ſaints were diſciples of our bleſſed Saviour, who had but lately paſſed through the valley of the ſhadow of death; for when they went into the city, they were known to be ſaints by the perſons who ſaw them, which could not well have happened if they had not been cotemporaries.

And as the rending of the vail of the temple intimated, that the entrance into the holy place, the type of heaven was now laid open to all nations; ſo the reſurrection of a number of ſaints from the dead demonſtrated, that the power of death and the grave was broken: the ſting was taken from death, and the victory wreſted from the grave. In ſhort, our dear Redeemer's conqueſts over the enemies of mankind were ſhewn to be complete, and an earneſt was given of the general reſurrection from the dead.

Nor did the remarkable particulars which attended that awful period when Jeſus gave up the ghoſt, affect the natives of Judea only. The Roman centurion, who was placed near the croſs to prevent diſorders of any kind, glorified the Almighty, and cried out, *Truly this was the Son of God.* And all the people when they beheld heaven itſelf bearing witneſs of the truth of our great Redeemer's miſſion, ſmote their breaſts and returned. They had been inſtant with loud voices to have him crucified; but when they ſaw the face of the creation wrapt in the gloomy mantle of darkneſs during his crucifixion, and found his death accompanied with an earthquake, as if nature had been in an agony when he died, they rightly interpreted theſe prodigies to be ſo many teſtimonies from the Almighty of his innocence; and their paſſions which had been inflamed and exaſperated againſt him, became quite calm, or exerted in his behalf. Some were angry with themſelves for neglecting the opportunity the governor gave them of ſaving his life. Some were ſtung with remorſe for having been active in procuring Pilate to condemn him, and even offering the moſt bitter inſults, while he laboured under the cruelleſt of ſufferings. And others were deeply affected at beholding the pains he ſuffered, which were undeſervedly ſevere.

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These various passions being visibly painted in their countenances, afforded a melancholy spectacle; the whole multitude returning from the cruel execution with their eyes fixed upon the earth, pensive and silent; their heart ready to burst with grief, groaning deeply within themselves, shedding floods of tears, and smiting on their breasts.

The grief they now felt for the blessed Jesus was distinguished from their former rage against him by this remarkable particular, that their rage was entirely owing to the artful insinuations of the priests; whereas their grief was the genuine, the natural feeling of their own hearts, greatly affected with the truth and innocence of him who was the object of their commiseration. And as flattery had no share in this mourning, so the expressions of their sorrow was such as became a real, an unfeigned passion.

Nor was this unaffected mourning shewn by only a few persons, who might have been represented as the particular friends of the suffering Jesus; no, it was the general condition of the people who had repaired to Calvary, in order to behold the crucifixion of our dear Redeemer, that when they parted after he had given up the ghost, they covered the roads, and as it were darkened all the adjacent fields.

CHAP. XXXIX.

A Roman soldier pierces our Saviour's side. Joseph of Arimathea begs his body of Pilate.

IT was expressly forbidden by the law of Moses, that the bodies of those who were hanged should remain all night on the tree. In conformity to this law, and because the sabbath was at hand, the Jews begged the governor, that the legs of the three persons crucified might be broken, to hasten their death. To this request Pilate readily consented; and accordingly gave the necessary order to the soldiers to put it in execution.

But on perceiving that Jesus was already dead, the soldiers did not give themselves the trouble of breaking his legs, as they had done those of the two malefactors that were crucified with him. One of them, however, either out of wantonness or cruelty, thrust a spear into his side, and out of the wound flowed blood and water. Some suppose that the spear reached his heart; but however that be, it is certain, from the water which issued from the wound, that he pierced the pericardium; and consequently must have killed him, had he not before given up the ghost.

This wound therefore was of the greatest importance to mankind, as it abundantly demonstrated the truth of our Saviour's death, and, consequently, prevented all objections, that the enemies to our holy faith would otherwise have raised against it. The Evangelist adds, that the legs of our great Redeemer were not broken; but his side pierced, that two particular prophecies might be fulfilled, *A bone of him shall not be broken*, and *They shall look on him whom they have pierced*.

Among the disciples of the blessed Jesus was one called Joseph of Arimathea,

mathea; a perſon equally remarkable for his birth, fortune, and office. This man, who was not to be intimidated by the malice of his countrymen, went boldly to Pilate, and begged the body of his great maſter. He had indeed nothing to fear from the Roman governor, who, during the whole courſe of our Saviour's trial, had ſhewn the greateſt inclination to releaſe him: but he had reaſon to apprehend that this action might draw upon him the malice of the rulers of the Jews, who had taken ſo great pains to get their Meſſiah crucified. The great regard however he had for the remains of his maſter, made him deſpiſe the malice of the Jews; being perſuaded that Omnipotence would defend him, and cover his enemies with ſhame and confuſion. And he well knew, that if no friend procured a grant of the body, it would be ignominiouſly caſt out among the executed malefactors.

Pilate was at firſt ſurpriſed at the requeſt of Joſeph; thinking it highly improbable that he ſhould be dead in ſo ſhort a time. He had indeed given orders for the ſoldiers to break the legs of the crucified perſons; but he knew it was not uncommon for them to live many hours after that operation was performed; for though the pain they left muſt be exquiſite in the laſt degree, yet as the vital parts remained untouched, life would continue ſome time in the miſerable body. The governor therefore called the centurion to know the truth of what Joſeph had told him; and being convinced from the anſwer of that officer that Jeſus had been dead ſome time, he readily gave the body to Joſeph.

This worthy counſellor having obtained his requeſt, repaired to mount Calvary; and being aſſiſted by Nichodemus, took the body down from the croſs. The latter was formerly ſo cautious in viſiting Jeſus that he came to him by night. But in paying the laſt duties to his maſter, he uſed no art to conceal his deſign. He ſhewed a courage far ſuperior to that of any of the apoſtles; not only aſſiſting Joſeph in taking down the body of Jeſus from the croſs, but bringing with him a quantity of ſpices neceſſary in the burial of his Saviour.

Accordingly they wrapt the body with the ſpices in fine linen, and laid it in a new ſepulchre, which Joſeph had hewn out of a rock for himſelf. This ſepulchre was ſituated in a garden near mount Calvary; but being not entirely finiſhed when they depoſited in it the body of the bleſſed Jeſus, they faſtened the door by rolling on it a very large ſtone.

Oh! what a wonderful ſpectacle was now exhibited in this memorable ſepulchre! He who clothes himſelf with light, as with a garment, and walks upon the wings of the wind, was pleaſed to wear the habiliments of mortality, and dwell among the proſtrate dead! Who can repeat the wondrous truth too often? Who can dwell upon the enchanting theme too long? He who ſits enthroned in glory, and diffuſes bliſs among all the heavenly hoſt, was once a pale and bloody corpſe, and preſſed the floor of this little ſepulchre!

O death!



And Joseph of Arimathea (being a Disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews) besought Pilate that he might take away the Body of Jesus; and Pilate gave him leave: He came therefore and took the Body of Jesus. John XIX, 38.

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O death! how great was thy triumph in that hour! never did thy gloomy realms contain ſuch a priſoner before.—Priſoner did I ſay? No, he was more than conqueror. He aroſe far more mightily than Sampſon from a tranſient ſlumber; broke down the gates, and demoliſhed the ſtrong holds of thoſe dark dominions. And this, O mortals, is your conſolation and ſecurity. Jeſus has trod the dreadful path, and ſmoothed it for your paſſage. Jeſus, ſleeping in the chambers of the tomb, has brightened the diſmal manſion, and left an inviting odour in thoſe beds of duſt. The dying Jeſus is your ſure protection, your unqueſtionable paſſport through the territories of the grave. Believe in him and they ſhall prove a *highway to Sion*; ſhall tranſmit you ſafe to Paradiſe. Believe in him, and you ſhall be no loſers, but unſpeakable gainers by your diſſolution. For hear what the oracle of heaven ſays on this important point; *whoſo believeth in me, ſhall never die*. Death ſhall no longer be inflicted as a puniſhment, but rather vouchſafed as a bleſſing. Their exit is the end of their frailty, and their entrance upon perfection: their laſt groan is the prelude to life and immortality.

But to return. The women of Galilee who had watched their dear Redeemer in his laſt moments, and accompanied his body to the ſepulchre, obſerving that the funeral rites were performed in a hurry, agreed among themſelves, as ſoon as the ſabbath was paſſed, to return to the ſepulchre, and embalm the body of their dead Saviour, by anointing and ſwathing him in the manner then common among the Jews. Accordingly, they returned to the city, and purchaſed the ſpices neceſſary for that purpoſe; Nichodemus having furniſhed only a mixture of myrrh and aloes.

During theſe tranſactions, the chief prieſts and Phariſees, remembering that Jeſus had more than once predicted his own reſurrection, came to the governor, and informed him of it; begging at the ſame time that a guard might be placed at the ſepulchre, leſt his diſciples ſhould carry away the body, and affirm that he was riſen from the dead. This happened a little before it was dark in the evening, called the next day that followed by the Evangeliſt, becauſe the Jewiſh day began at ſun-ſet. This requeſt being thought reaſonable by Pilate, he gave them leave to take as many ſoldiers as they pleaſed out of the cohort, which at the feaſt came from the caſtle Antonia, and kept guard in the porticos of the temple. For that they were not Jewiſh but Roman ſoldiers, whom the prieſts employed to watch the ſepulchre, is evident from their aſking them of the governor. Beſides, when the ſoldiers returned with the news of our Saviour's reſurrection, the prieſts deſired them to report that his diſciples had ſtolen him away while they ſlept; and to encourage them to tell the falſhood, boldly promiſed, that if their neglect of duty came to the governor's ears, proper methods ſhould be uſed to pacify him, and deliver them from any puniſhment:

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a promiſe which there was no need of making to their own ſervants.

The prieſts having thus obtained a guard of Roman ſoldiers, men long accuſtomed to military duties, and therefore the moſt proper for watching the body, ſet out with them to the ſepulchre; and to prevent theſe guards from combining with the diſciples in carrying on any fraud, placed them at their poſt, and ſealed the ſtone which was rolled to the door of the ſepulchre.

Thus while the prieſts cautiouſly propoſed to prevent the reſurrection of our great Redeemer from being palmed upon the world, and doubtleſs intended, after the third day was paſt, to ſhew his body publicly as an impoſtor, they placed the truth of this ſtupendous miracle beyond all doubt, by furniſhing a number of unexceptionable witneſſes to it, whoſe teſtimony they themſelves could not refuſe.

CHAP. XL.

Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, go out to view the ſepulchre. A great earthquake happens. An angel deſcends, and Jeſus riſes from the dead.

VERY early in the morning after the ſabbath, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, came to viſit the ſepulchre, in order to embalm our Lord's body; for the performance of which they had, in concert with ſeveral other women from Galilee, brought unguents and ſpices. But before they reached the ſepulchre, there was a great earthquake preceding the moſt memorable event that ever happened among the children of men, the reſurrection of the Son of God from the dead. *For the angel of the Lord deſcended from heaven, and came and rolled back the ſtone from the door of the ſepulchre, and ſat upon it: his countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as ſnow; and for fear of him the keepers did ſhake, and became as dead men*; they fled into the city, and the Saviour of the world roſe from the dead.

The angel, who had till then ſat upon the ſtone, quitted his ſtation, entered into the ſepulchre, and probably placed the linen cloaths and napkin in the order they were afterwards found and obſerved by John and Peter. In the mean time Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were ſtill on their way to the ſepulchre, together with Salome, who joined them on the road. As they proceeded on their way they conſulted among themſelves with regard to the method of putting their intention of embalming the body of their beloved maſter in execution; particularly with reſpect to the enormous ſtone which they had ſeen placed there with the utmoſt difficulty two days before. *Who*, ſaid they, *ſhall roll us away the ſtone from the door of the ſepulchre? for it was very great.* But in the midſt of their deliberation about removing this great and ſole obſtacle to their deſign (for it does not appear they knew any thing of the guard) they lift up their eyes, and perceived it was already rolled away. Alarmed

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at ſo extraordinary and ſo unexpected a circumſtance, Mary Magdalene concluded, that the ſtone could not be rolled away without ſome deſign; and that they who rolled it away could have no other deſign, than that of removing our Lord's body. And being convinced by appearances that they had really done ſo, ſhe ran immediately to acquaint Peter and John of what ſhe had ſeen, and what ſhe ſuſpected; leaving Mary and Salome there, that if the other women ſhould arrive during her abſence, they might acquaint them with their ſurprize at finding the ſtone removed, and of Mary Magdalene's running to inform the apoſtles of it.

In the mean time the ſoldiers, who were terrified at ſeeing an aweful meſſenger from on high roll away the ſtone from the door of the ſepulchre, and open it in quality of a ſervant, fled into the city, and informed the Jewiſh rulers of theſe miraculous appearances. This account was highly mortifying to the chief prieſts, as it was a proof of our Saviour's reſurrection that could not be denied: they therefore reſolved to ſtifle it immediately; and accordingly bribed the ſoldiers to conceal the real fact, and to publiſh every where, that his diſciples had ſtolen the body out of the ſepulchre. What! the body taken away while the ſepulchre was guarded by Roman ſoldiers! Yes! the diſciples ſtole the body while the ſoldiers ſlept! A ſtory ſo inconſiſtent, and which ſo evidently carries the marks of its own confutation with it, deſerves no anſwer. The prieſts themſelves could not be ſo ſtupid as not to foreſee what conſtructions the world would put upon the relation of perſons, who pretended to know and tell what was done while they were aſleep.

CHAP. XLI.

The angel's ſpeech to the women. Peter and John go into the ſepulchre. Chriſt appears to Mary Magdalene. The company of women ſet out a ſecond time in queſt of Peter and John. Jeſus meets them. Mary Magdalene and the company of women, return from their ſeveral interviews with Jeſus. Peter runs to the ſepulchre a ſecond time, and as he returns ſees his great Lord and Maſter.

WHILE Mary Magdalene was going to inform the diſciples that the ſtone was rolled away from the mouth of the ſepulchre, and the ſuppoſed body taken away, Mary and Salome continued advancing towards the ſepulchre, and at their arrival found what they expected, the body of their beloved maſter gone from the place where it had been depoſited by Nichodemus and Joſeph of Arimathea; but at the ſame time beheld, to their great aſtoniſhment, a beautiful young man, in ſhining rayment, very glorious to behold, ſitting at the right ſide of the ſepulchre. Matthew tells us that it was the angel who had rolled away the ſtone, and frightened away the guards from the ſepulchre. It ſeems he had now laid aſide his

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terrors in which he was then arrayed, and assumed the form and dress of a human being, in order that these pious women, who had accompanied him during the greatest part of the time of his public ministry, might be as little terrified as possible.

But notwithstanding his beauty and benign appearance, they were greatly affrighted, and on the point of turning back, when the heavenly messenger, to banish their fears, told them, in a gentle accent, that he knew their errand. *Fear not*, said he, *for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here; for he is risen, as he said:* and then invited them to come down into the sepulchre, and view the place where the son of God had lain; that is, to look on the linen cloaths, and the napkin that was about his head, and which he had left behind him when he arose from the dead: for to look at the place in any other view would not have tended to confirm their faith of his resurrection.

The women, greatly encouraged by the agreeable news, as well as by the sweet accent with which this messenger from the heavenly Canaan delivered his speech, went down into the sepulchre, when behold another of the angelic choir, appeared. Probably the one sat at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain; the position in which they afterwards appeared to Mary Magdalen.

They did not however yet seem to give credit to what was told them by the angel; and therefore the other gently chid them for seeking the living among the dead, with an intention to do him an office due only to the latter, and for not believing what was told them by a messenger from heaven, or rather for not remembering the words which their great master had himself told them with regard to his own resurrection. *Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, saying, the son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.*

When the women had satisfied their curiosity by looking at the place where the Lord had lain, and where nothing was to be found but the linen cloaths, the angel who first appeared to them resumed the discourse, and bade them go and tell his disciples, particularly Peter, the glad tidings of his resurrection from the dead; that he was going before them to Galilee; and that they should there have the pleasure of seeing him.

The reason why the disciples were ordered to go into Galilee to meet their great and beloved master seems to be this: they were now most of them in Jerusalem, celebrating the passover; and it may easily be imagined that, on receiving the news of their Lord's resurrection, many if not all of them, would resolve to tarry in Jerusalem, in expectation of meeting him: a thing which must have proved of great detriment to them at that time of the year, when the harvest was about to begin, the sheaf of first fruits being always offered

fered on the ſecond day of the paſſover-week. In order therefore to prevent their ſtaying ſo long from home, the meſſage was ſent directing them to return into Galilee, with full aſſurance, that they ſhould there have the pleaſure of ſeeing their great Lord and Maſter; and by that means be happily relieved from the ſuſpicion of his being an impoſtor, which doubtleſs had ariſen in their minds, when they ſaw him expire on the croſs.

The women, highly elated with the news of their Lord's reſurrection, left the ſepulchre immediately, and ran to carry the diſciples theſe glad tidings.

During theſe tranſactions at the ſepulchre, Peter and John, having been informed by Mary Magdalene, that the ſtone was rolled away, and the body of Jeſus not to be found, were haſtening to the grave, and miſſed the women who had ſeen this viſion of angels. Theſe diſciples being aſtoniſhed at what Mary Magdalene had told them, and deſirous of having their doubts cleared up, made all the haſte poſſible to the ſepulchre; and John being younger than Peter arrived at the ſepulchre firſt, but did not go in, contenting himſelf with ſtooping down and ſeeing the linen cloaths lying which had been wrapped about our Saviour's body. Peter ſoon arrived, and went into the ſepulchre, where he ſaw the *linen cloaths lie: and the napkin that was about his head not lying with the linen cloaths, but wrapped together in a place by itſelf.*

Some are of opinion that our dear Redeemer folded up the napkin, to ſhew the perfect calmneſs and compoſure with which he aroſe, as out of a common ſleep. But however that be, it is certain that he left the grave cloaths in the ſepulchre, to ſhew that his body was not ſtolen away by his diſciples, who in ſuch a caſe would not have taken time to have ſtripped it. Beſides, the circumſtances of the grave-cloaths diſpoſed the diſciples themſelves to believe when the reſurrection was related to them. But at preſent they had not the leaſt ſuſpicion that he was roſe from the dead.

Theſe two diſciples having thus ſatisfied themſelves that what Mary Magdalene had told them was really true, returned to their reſpective habitations; but Mary continued weeping at the door of the ſepulchre. She had, it ſeems, followed Peter and John to the garden; but did not return with them, being anxious to find the body. Accordingly, ſtepping down into the ſepulchre to examine it once more, ſhe ſaw two angels ſitting, the one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jeſus had lain. They were now in the ſame poſition, as when they appeared to the other women; but had rendered themſelves inviſible while Peter and John were at the ſepulchre.

On her beholding theſe heavenly meſſengers dreſſed in the robes of light, ſhe was greatly terrified. But they in the moſt endearing accent, aſked her, *Woman why weepeſt thou?* To which ſhe anſwered, *Becauſe they*

have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. On pronouncing theſe words ſhe turned herſelf about, and ſaw Jeſus ſtanding near her; but the terror ſhe was in, and the garments in which he was now dreſſed, prevented her from knowing him for ſome time. Jeſus repeated the ſame queſtion uſed before before by the angel, *Woman why weepeſt thou?* To which Mary, who now ſuppoſed him to be the gardener anſwered, Sir, if his body was troubleſome in the ſepulchre, and thou haſt removed him, tell me where he is depoſited, and I will take him away. But our bleſſed Saviour, willing to remove her anxiety, called her by her name, with his uſual tone of voice. On which ſhe immediately knew him; and falling down before him, would have embraced his knees, according to that modeſty and reverence with which the women of the eaſt ſaluted the men, eſpecially thoſe who were their ſuperiors in ſtation.

But Jeſus refuſed this compliment, telling her that he was not going immediately into heaven. He was often to ſhew himſelf to his diſciples before he aſcended; ſo that ſhe would have frequent opportunities of ſhewing her regard to him. And at the ſame time, ſaid to her, *Go to my brethren, and ſay unto them, I aſcend to my father and your father; and to my God and your God.* Thus did the bleſſed Jeſus contemplate with a ſingular pleaſure, the work of redemption he had juſt finiſhed. The happy relation between God and man, which had been long cancelled by ſin, was now renewed. The Almighty, who had diſowned them on account of their rebellion, was again reconciled to them: he was become their God and Father; they were exalted to the honourable relation of Chriſt's brethren, and the ſons of God; and their father loved them with an affection far exceeding that of the moſt tender-hearted parent upon earth. The kindneſs of this meſſage ſent by our dear Redeemer to his diſciples will appear above all praiſe, if we remember their late behaviour. They had every one of them forſaken him in his greateſt extremity: when he was ſcourged and mocked by the Roman ſoldiers, derided by his countrymen, and ſpitefully intreated by all, they hid themſelves in ſome place of ſafety, and preferred their own ſecurity to the deliverance of their maſter. When he fainted under the burden of his croſs, not one of them was there to aſſiſt him. Simon a Cyrenian was compelled by the Roman ſoldiers to eaſe him of this ponderous burden. But notwithſtanding they had refuſed to aſſiſt their maſter during his ſufferings for the ſins of the world, he graciouſly, he freely forgave them; he aſſured them of their pardon, and even called them by the endearing name of brethren.

I cannot help obſerving that there is ſomething very remarkable in this part of the hiſtory. None of the apoſtles, or male diſciples were honoured with the firſt viſions of the angels, or with the immediate news of the reſurrection of the ſon of God, much

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Jesus appeareth to Mary Magdalene. John XX 14

much leſs with the appearance of Jeſus himſelf. The angels in the ſepulchre kept themſelves inviſible all the time that Peter and John were obſerving the linen cloaths, and ſatisfying themſelves that the body of their maſter was not there. Perhaps the male diſciples in general were treated with this mark of diſreſpect, both becauſe they had, with ſhameful cowardice, forſaken their maſter when he was betrayed into the hands of his enemies, and becauſe their faith was ſo weak that they had abſolutely deſpaired of his being the Meſſiah when they ſaw him expire on the croſs. But how different was the conduct of the women! Laying aſide the weakneſs and timidity natural to their ſex, they ſhewed an uncommon magnanimity on this melancholy occaſion. For in contradiction to the whole nation, who with one voice required Jeſus to be crucified as a deceiver, they proclaimed his innocence by tears, cries, and lamentations, when they ſaw him led forth to ſuffer on mount Calvary; accompanied him to the croſs, the moſt infamous of all puniſhments; kindly waited on him in his expiring moments, giving him all the conſolation in their power, though at the ſame time the ſight of his ſufferings pierced them to the heart; and when he expired and was carried off, they accompanied him to his grave, not deſpairing though they found he had not delivered himſelf, but to appearance was conquered by death, the univerſal enemy of mankind. Perhaps theſe pious women entertained ſome faint hopes that he would ſtill revive. Or, if they did not entertain expectations of that kind, they at leaſt cheriſhed a ſtrong degree of love for their lord, and determined to do him all the honour in their power.

A faith ſo remarkably ſtrong, a love ſo ardent, and a fortitude ſo unſhaken, could not fail of receiving diſtinguiſhing marks of the divine approbation: and they were accordingly honoured with the news of Chriſt's reſurrection before the male diſciples had their eyes cheared with the firſt ſight of their beloved Lord, after he aroſe from the chambers of the grave; ſo that they preached the joyful tidings of his reſurrection to the apoſtles themſelves.

But there ſeems to have been other reaſons why our great Redeemer ſhewed himſelf firſt to the women. The thoughts of the apoſtles were conſtantly fixed on a temporal kingdom, and they had wreſted all his words into an agreement with that favourite notion. And whatever they could not conſtrue as conſonant to that opinion, they ſeem either to have diſbelieved or diſregarded. Hence, notwithſtanding Jeſus had foretold his own ſufferings no leſs than ſeven different times, they were aſtoniſhed above meaſure when they ſaw him expire on the croſs. Immortality and terreſtrial dominion were, according to their notion, the characteriſtics of the Meſſiah; for which reaſon, when they found that inſtead of eſtabliſhing himſelf in the poſſeſſion of univerſal empire, he had neither delivered himſelf from an handful of enemies nor even from

death, they gave over all hopes of his being the Meſſiah. And as for his reſurrection they ſeem not to have entertained the leaſt notion of it; ſo that when the news of this great event was brought to them, they conſidered it as an idle tale.

Not ſo the women. They were more ſubmiſſive to their maſter's inſtructions, and conſequently were much better prepared for ſeeing him after his reſurrection than the apoſtles. For though they did not expect that he would riſe from the dead, yet they were not prejudiced againſt it. This cannot be ſaid of the apoſtles; they not only abſolutely rejected the matter at firſt, as a thing incredible, but even after they were acquainted with the accounts the ſoldiers had given of this great tranſaction; nay after they had ſeen the bleſſed Jeſus himſelf, ſome of them were ſo unreaſonable as ſtill to doubt. How much rather then would their incredulity have led them to ſuſpect his appearing as an illuſion, had he ſhewed himſelf to them! Theſe reports led them to recollect the arguments proper for diſpoſing them to believe; particularly the prophecies that had been ſo often delivered in their own hearing, concerning his reſurrection. Hence the angels, when they told this event to the women, and deſired them to carry the news of it to his diſciples; they put them in mind of the predictions Jeſus himſelf had made, as a confirmation of it. Hence we alſo ſee the reaſon why Jeſus before he made himſelf known to the diſciples at Emmaus, he prepared them for a diſcovery, by expounding to them on the road, the ſeveral prophecies concerning the Meſſiah, contained in the Old Teſtament.

I have already obſerved, that the company of women returned to the city, while Peter, John, and Mary Magdalene, were at the ſepulchre. On their arrival they told as many of the diſciples as they could find, that they had ſeen at the ſepulchre a viſion of angels, who aſſured them that Jeſus was riſen from the dead. This new information aſtoniſhed the diſciples exceedingly. And as they had before ſent Peter and John to examine into the truth of what Mary Magdalene had told them concerning the body's being removed out of the ſepulchre, ſo they now judged it highly proper to ſend ſome of their number to ſee the angels, and learn from them the joyful tidings of that great tranſaction of which the women had given them an account.

That it was really the caſe appears from what the diſciples, in their journey to Emmaus, told their great Lord and Maſter; namely, that when the women came and told them that they had ſeen a viſion of angels, certain of their number went to the ſepulchre, and found it even as the women had ſaid, but him they ſaw not.

This ſecond deputation from the apoſtles did not go alone; for as Mary Magdalene returned with Peter and John, who were ſent to examine the truth of her information, ſo the women who brought an account of the viſion of angels, in all proba-

probability returned with thoſe who were ſent to be witneſſes of the truth of their report. Beſides curioſity, they had an errand thither. The angels had expreſsly ordered them to tell the news to Peter in particular; for which reaſon when they underſtood that he was gone to the ſepulchre, it is natural to think they would return with the diſciples to ſeek him. About the time that the diſciples and women ſet out for the ſepulchre, Peter and John reached the city; but paſſing through a different ſtreet, did not meet their brethren.

The diſciples having a great deſire to reach the ſepulchre, ſoon left the women behind, and juſt as they arrived, Mary Magdalene having ſeen the Lord was coming away. But they did not meet her, becauſe they entered the garden at one door, while ſhe was coming out at another. When they came to the ſepulchre, they ſaw the angels, and received from them the news of their bleſſed Maſter's reſurrection; for St. Luke tells us, *they found it even as the women had ſaid.* Highly elated with their ſucceſs, they departed and ran back to the city, with ſuch expedition, that they gave an account of what they had ſeen in the hearing of the two diſciples, before Mary Magdalene arrived.

Nor will their ſpeed appear at all incredible, if we conſider that the nature of the tidings the apoſtles had to carry gave them wings, as it were, to make their brethren partakers of their joy at this ſurpriſing tranſaction.

In the mean time the company of women who followed the diſciples, happening to meet Peter and John, went forward in queſt of them. But they had not gone far from the ſepulchre, before Jeſus himſelf met them, and ſaid *All hail.* On which they approached their great Lord and Maſter, *held him by the feet, and worſhipped him.* This favour of embracing his knees Jeſus had before refuſed to Mary Magdalene, becauſe it was not then neceſſary: but he granted it to the women, becauſe the angel's words having ſtrongly impreſſed their minds with the notion of his reſurrection, they might have taken his appearing, for an illuſion of their own imagination, had he not permitted them to handle him, and convince themſelves by the united reports of their ſenſes. Beſides, if our Lord intended that Mary Magdalene ſhould go away as faſt as poſſible, and publiſh the news, he might hinder her from embracing his knees, to prevent her loſing any time.

This company of pious women having tarried ſome time with Jeſus on the road, did not arrive with the joyful tidings of their great Maſter's reſurrection, till ſome time after Peter and John; and perhaps were overtaken by Mary Magdalene on the road, unleſs we ſuppoſe that ſhe arrived a few minutes before them. But be that as it may, this is certain that they arrived either at, or near the ſame time; ſo that their accounts of this miraculous event tended to confirm each other.

The diſciples were now loſt in aſtoniſh-

aſtoniſhment at what the women had related; they conſidered the account they had before given them of their having ſeen a viſion of angels as an idle tale, and now they ſeem to have conſidered this as ſomething worſe; for the Evangeliſt tells us, they *believed not*. Peter indeed, to whom the angel ſent the meſſage, was diſpoſed by his ſanguine temper, to give a little more credit to their words than the reſt: poſſibly becauſe the meſſengers from the heavenly Canaan, had done him the honour of naming him in particular. Elated with the reſpect paid him in particular, he immediately repaired again to the ſepulchre; hoping, in all probability, that his maſter would appear to him, or at leaſt the angel, who had ſo particularly diſtinguiſhed him from the reſt of the diſciples.

As ſoon as Peter arrived at the ſepulchre he ſtooped down; and ſeeing the linen cloaths lying in the ſame manner as before, he viewed their poſition, the form in which they were laid, and returned wondering *greatly in himſelf at that which was come to paſs*. In all probability, it was now that Peter was favoured with the ſight of his maſter, 1 *Cor.* xv. 5. for the Evangeliſt tells us that it happened on the day of our bleſſed Saviour's reſurrection. *Luke* xxiv. 33, 34.

CHAP. XLII.

Jeſus appears to two of his diſciples on the road to Emmaus. He appears to his apoſtles on the evening of the reſurrection, Thomas being abſent. He appears again to the Apoſtles, and convinces Thomas. Shews himſelf to his diſciples at the ſea of Tiberias: And to five hundred of the brethren in Galilee.

SOON after the women's firſt return to the diſciples with the news that they had ſeen a viſion of angels, who told them, that Jeſus was riſen from the dead, two of the brethren departed on their journey to a village called Emmaus, about two miles diſtant from Jeruſalem. The concern they were in on account of the death of their great and beloved Maſter, was ſufficiently viſible in their countenances. And as they purſued their journey, talked with one another, and debating about the things that had lately happened among them, concerning the life and doctrine, the ſufferings and death of the holy Jeſus, and of the report that was juſt ſpread among his diſciples of his being that very morning riſen from the dead; Jeſus himſelf overtook them, and joined company with them.

As he appeared like a ſtranger they did not in the leaſt ſuſpect, that their fellow-traveller was no other than the great Redeemer of the ſons of men. He ſoon entered into diſcourſe with them, by enquiring what event had ſo cloſely engaged them in converſation, and why they appeared ſo ſorrowful and dejected, as if they had met with ſome heavy diſappointment?

One of them whoſe name was Cleophas, being ſurpriſed at the queſtion, replied, Is it poſſible, that you can be

be ſo great a ſtranger to the affairs of the world, as to have been at Jeruſalem, and not have heard the ſurpriſing events that have happened there; events that have aſtoniſhed the whole city, and are now the conſtant topic of converſation among all the inhabitants? Jeſus anſwered, what ſurpriſing events do you mean? To which Cleophas replied, the tranſactions which have happened concerning Jeſus of Nazareth, who appeared as a great prophet and teacher ſent from God; and accordingly was highly venerated among the people, for the excellency of his doctrine, and the number, benefit, and greatneſs of his miracles. Our chief prieſts and elders therefore, envying him as one who leſſened their authority over the people, apprehended him, and found means to put him to death.

But we firmly believed he would have proved himſelf the Meſſiah, or great deliverer. And this perſuaſion we a long time ſupported; nor were we willing to abandon it, even when we ſaw him put to death. But it is now three days ſince theſe things were done; and therefore begin to fear we were miſtaken.

This very morning indeed a thing happened, which extremely ſurpriſes us, and we are very ſolicitous with regard to the event. Some women who had entertained the ſame hopes and expectations as we, going early in the morning to pay their laſt duties to their maſter, by embalming his body, returned with great haſte to the city, and informed us, that they had been at the ſepulchre, but were diſappointed in finding the body; and to increaſe our ſurprize they added, that they had ſeen a viſion of angels, who told them that Jeſus was riſen from the dead.

This relation appeared at firſt to us as an idle tale, altogether incredible; but two of the company going immediately after to the ſepulchre, found every thing exactly as the women had reported: they ſaw the angels, but heard not any thing of the body; ſo that we are ſtill in doubt and perplexity with regard to this wonderful event.

To which Jeſus replied, Why are ye ſo very averſe to believe all that the prophets have with one voice predicted concerning the Meſſiah? Is it not clearly, and very expreſsly foretold, in all the prophetic writings, that it was appointed by the council of Omnipotence for the Meſſiah to ſuffer in this manner, and that after ſuſtaining the greateſt indignities, reproach, and contempt from the malice and perverſeneſs of mankind, and even undergoing an ignominious and cruel death, to be exalted to a glorious and eternal kingdom? And having ſaid this, he began at the writings of Moſes, and explained to them in order all the principal paſſages, both in the books of that great legiſlator and the writings of the other prophets, relating to his own ſufferings, death, and glorious reſurrection.

And this he did, with ſuch ſurpriſing plainneſs, clearneſs, and ſtrength, that the two diſciples, not yet ſuſpecting who he was, were as much

much amazed to find a ſtranger ſo well acquainted with all that Jeſus did and ſuffered, as they at firſt wondered at his appearing to be totally ignorant of theſe tranſactions. They were alſo aſtoniſhed to hear him interpret and apply the ſcriptures to their preſent purpoſe, with ſuch readineſs and convincing clearneſs of argument, and carried with it a ſtrange and unuſual authority and efficacy. When therefore they came to the village whither they were going, and Jeſus ſeemed as if he would have paſſed on and travelled farther, they, deſirous of his company, preſſed him in the ſtrongeſt manner to tarry with them that night, as it was then late.

To this requeſt the great Redeemer of mankind conſented; and when they were ſat down to ſupper, he took bread, and gave thanks to God, and brake it, and gave it to them, in the ſame manner he uſed to do, while he converſed with them upon earth before his death. This engaged their attention, and looking ſtedfaſtly on him they perceived it was their great and beloved Maſter. But they had then no time to expreſs their joy and aſtoniſhment to their benevolent Redeemer; for he immediately vaniſhed out of their ſight.

As ſoon as they ſaw their maſter was departed, they ſaid one to another, how ſlow and ſtupid were we before, not to know him upon the road, while he explained to us the ſcriptures; when beſides the affability of his diſcourſe, and the ſtrength and clearneſs of his arguments, we perceived ſuch an authority in what he ſaid, and ſuch a powerful efficacy attending his words, and ſtriking our hearts with affection as we could not but have known, if we had not been remarkably ſtupid, to have been the very ſame that uſed to accompany his teaching, and was peculiar to it?

This ſurpriſing event would not admit them to ſtay any longer in Emmaus. They returned that very night to Jeruſalem, and found the apoſtles, with ſeveral other diſciples, diſcourſing about the reſurrection of their maſter; and on their entering the room, the diſciples accoſted them, ſaying, *The Lord is riſen indeed, and hath appeared unto Simon.*

They had given little credit to the reports of the women, ſuppoſing they were occaſioned more by imagination than reality. But when a perſon of Simon's capacity and gravity declared he had ſeen the Lord, they began to think that he was really riſen from the dead. And their belief was greatly confirmed by the arrival of the two diſciples from Emmaus, who declared to their brethren, how Jeſus had appeared to them on the road, and how they diſcovered him to be their Maſter by his breaking of bread.

While the diſciples from Emmaus were thus deſcribing the manner of the appearing of Jeſus to them, and offering arguments to convince thoſe who doubted the truth of it, their great maſter himſelf put an end to the debate, by ſtanding in the midſt of them, and ſaid, *Peace be unto you.*

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Christs Ascension into Heaven

This appearance of our bleſſed Saviour greatly terrified the diſciples, who ſuppoſed they had ſeen a ſpirit; for having ſecured the doors of the houſe where they were aſſembled for fear of the Jews, and Jeſus having opened the locks by his miraculous power, without the knowledge of any in the houſe, it was natural for them to think that a ſpiritual ſubſtance only could enter. The circumſtance therefore of the doors being ſhut is very happily mentioned by St. John; becauſe it ſuggeſts a reaſon why the diſciples took their Maſter for a ſpirit, notwithſtanding many of them were convinced that he was really riſen from the dead, and were that moment converſing about his reſurrection.

But, to diſpel their fears and doubts, Jeſus came forward, ſpake to them in the moſt endearing accent, ſhewed them his hands and his feet, and deſired them to handle him, in order to convince themſelves by the united report of their different ſenſes, that it was he himſelf, and no ſpectre or apparition. *Why are ye troubled*, ſaid the benevolent Redeemer of mankind, *and why do thoughts ariſe in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myſelf: handle me and ſee, for a ſpirit hath not fleſh and bones, as ye ſee me have.*

Theſe infallible proofs ſufficiently convinced the diſciples of the truth of their Lord's reſurrection, and they received him with rapture and exultation. But their joy and wonder had ſo great an effect on their minds, that ſome of them, ſenſible of the great commotion they were in, ſuſpended their belief, till they had conſidered the matter more calmly. Jeſus, therefore knowing their thoughts, called for meat, and eat with them, in order to prove more fully the truth of his reſurrection from the dead, and the reality of his preſence with them on this occaſion.

After giving this farther ocular demonſtration of his having vanquiſhed the power of death, and opened the tremendous portals of the grave, he again repeated his ſalutation, *Peace be unto you.* Adding, "The ſame commiſſion that my father hath given unto me, I give "unto you: go ye therefore into "every part of the world, and preach "the goſpel to all the children of "men." Then breathing on them, he ſaid, "Receive the Holy Ghoſt, "to direct and aſſiſt you in the exe-"cution of your commiſſion. Who-"ſoever embraces your doctrine, "and ſincerely repents, ye ſhall re-"mit his ſins, and your ſentence of "abſolution ſhall be ratified and con-"firmed in the courts of heaven. "And whoſoever either obſtinately "rejects your doctrine, diſobeys it, "or behaves himſelf unworthily, "after he hath embraced it, his ſins "ſhall not be forgiven him; but "the cenſure ye ſhall paſs upon him "on earth, ſhall be confirmed in "heaven."

Thomas, otherwiſe called Didymus, was abſent at this meeting of the apoſtles; nor did this happen without the ſpecial direction of providence, that the particular and extraordinary ſatisfaction which was

afterwards granted him, might be an abundant and undeniable teſtimony of the truth of our bleſſed Saviour's reſurrection, to all ſucceeding generations. The reſt of the apoſtles therefore told him, that they had ſeen the Lord, and repeated to him the words he had delivered in their hearing. But Thomas replied, "This event is of ſuch great "importance, that unleſs, to pre-"vent all poſſibility of deception, I "ſee him with my own eyes, and "feel him with my own hands, "putting my fingers into the print "of the nails whereby he was faſten-"ed to the croſs, and thruſt my "hand into his ſide which the ſol-"dier pierced with his ſpear; I will "not believe that he is really and "truly riſen from the dead."

Thus have I enumerated, in the moſt explicit manner, the tranſactions of that day on which the great Redeemer of mankind aroſe from the dead; a day highly to be remembered by the children of men throughout all generations. A day in which was fully completed and diſplayed the conceptions lodged in the breaſt of infinite wiſdom from all eternity; even thoſe thoughts of love and mercy, on which the ſalvation of the world depended. Chriſtians have therefore the higheſt reaſon to ſolemnize this day with gladneſs each returning week, by ceaſing from their labour, and giving up themſelves to prayer, pious meditations, and other exerciſes of religion. The redemption of mankind which they weekly commemorate affords matter for eternal thought; it is a ſubject impoſſible to be equalled, and whoſe luſtre neither length of time nor frequent reviewing can either tarniſh or diminiſh. It reſembles the ſun, which we behold always the ſame glorious and luminous object; for the benefit we celebrate is, after ſo many ages, as freſh and beautiful as ever, and will always continue the ſame, flouriſhing in the memories of all reaſonable beings through the endleſs revolutions of eternity. Redemption is the brighteſt mirror in which we contemplate the goodneſs of the Almighty. Other gifts are only mites from the divine treaſury; but redemption opens, I had almoſt ſaid, exhauſts all the ſtores of his grace. May it be conſtantly the favourite ſubject of our meditations, more delightful to our muſing minds than applauſe to the ambitious ear! May it be the darling theme of our diſcourſes; ſweeter to our tongues than the droppings of the honey-comb to the taſte! May it be our choiceſt comfort, through all the changes of this mortal life; and the reviving cordial even in the laſt extremities of diſſolution itſelf!

Eight days after the reſurrection of our great Redeemer, the bleſſed Jeſus ſhewed himſelf again to his diſciples while Thomas was with them; and upbraided that diſciple for his unbelief: but knowing that it did not, like that of the Phariſees proceed from a wicked mind, but from an honeſt heart, and a ſincere deſire of being ſatisfied of the truth, he addreſſed particularly to his doubting diſciple: "Thomas, ſaid he, ſince thou wilt not be contented to

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" rely on the teſtimony of others, " but muſt be convinced by the ex- " perience of thy own ſenſes, behold " the wounds in my hands, and " reach hither thy hand, and thruſt " it into my ſide, and doubt no " longer of the reality of my reſur- " rection."

Thomas immediately obeyed the kind invitation of his maſter; and being fully ſatisfied according to his own deſire, he cried out, " I " am abundantly convinced; thou " art indeed my Lord, the very ſame " that was crucified; and I acknow- " ledge thy Almighty power, in " having triumphed over death, and " worſhip thee as my God."

To which the bleſſed Jeſus replied: " Becauſe thou haſt both " ſeen and felt me, Thomas, thou " haſt believed that I am really riſen " from the dead. Bleſſed are they, " who without ſuch evidence of the " ſenſes, ſhall, upon credible teſti- " mony, be willing to believe and " embrace a doctrine, which tends " ſo greatly to the glory of God, and " the ſalvation of the ſons of men."

St. John adds, that the bleſſed Jeſus appeared on ſeveral other occaſions to his diſciples after his reſurrection, and by many infallible proofs, not mentioned by the Evangeliſts, fully convinced them that he was alive after his paſſion. But that thoſe which are mentioned are abundantly ſufficient to induce men to believe that Jeſus was the ſon of God, the great Meſſiah ſo often foretold by the ancient prophets; and that by means of that belief they may obtain everlaſting life, in the happy regions of the heavenly Canaan.

Our bleſſed Saviour having firſt by the angels, and afterwards in perſon ordered his diſciples to repair to their reſpective habitations in Galilee, it is reaſonable to think they would leave Jeruſalem as ſoon as poſſible. This they accordingly did, and on their arrival at their reſpective places of abode, applied themſelves to their uſual occupations; and the apoſtles returned to their old trade of fiſhing on the lake of Tiberius. Here they were toiling with their nets very early in the morning, and ſaw Jeſus ſtanding on the ſhore, but did not then know him to be their maſter, as it was ſomething dark, and they at a conſiderable diſtance from him. He, however, called to them and aſked if they had taken any fiſh; to which they anſwerd they had caught nothing. He then deſired them to let down their nets on the right ſide of the boat, and they ſhould not be diſappointed. The diſciples imagining that he might be acquainted with the places proper for fiſhing, did as he had directed them, and incloſed in their net ſo vaſt a multitude of fiſhes, that they were not able to draw it into the boat, but were forced to drag it after them in the water towards the ſhore.

It ſeems they had toiled all the preceding night to no purpoſe; and therefore ſuch remarkable ſucceſs could not fail of cauſing various conjectures among them with regard to the ſtranger on the ſhore, who had given them ſuch happy advice. Some of the apoſtles declared they could not

not imagine who he was; but others were perſuaded that this perſon was no other than their great and beloved Maſter. John was fully convinced of his being the Lord, and accordingly told his thoughts to Simon Peter; who making no doubt of it, girt on his fiſher's coat, and leaped into the ſea, in order to get aſhore ſooner than the boat could be brought to land dragging after it a net full of ſuch large fiſhes.

When the diſciples came a-ſhore they found a fire kindled, and on it a fiſh broiling, and near it ſome bread. But neither being ſufficient for the company, Jeſus bid them bring ſome of the fiſh they had now caught, and invited them to eat with him. Thus did the bleſſed Jeſus prove again to his diſciples the reality of his reſurrection, not only by eating with them, but by working a miracle like that, which, at the beginning of his miniſtry, had made ſuch an impreſſion upon them, as diſpoſed them to be his conſtant followers.

This was the third time that Jeſus appeared publickly to a great number of his diſciples in a body, beſides his ſhewing himſelf at ſeveral times to particulars perſons, upon ſpecial occaſions.

When they had eaten, Jeſus reminded Peter how diligent and zealous he ought to be, in order to wipe off the ſtain of his denying him when he was carried before the high-prieſt. "Simon, ſon of Jonas," ſaid our bleſſed Saviour to him, "art thou "more zealous and affectionate in "thy love towards me, than the "reſt of my diſciples?" To which Peter anſwered, *Yea, Lord: thou knoweſt that I love thee.* He was taught modeſty and diffidence by his late fall; and therefore would not compare himſelf with others, but humbly appealed to his maſter's omniſcience, for the ſincerity of his regard to him. Jeſus anſwered, "Expreſs then thy love towards me by "the care of my flock committed "to thy charge. *Feed my lambs,* "*Feed my ſheep.*"

"I well know indeed, continued "the bleſſed Jeſus, that thou wilt "continue my faithful ſhepherd even "until death. For the time will "come, when thou who now girteſt "on thy fiſher's coat voluntarily, and "ſtretchedſt out thy hands to come "to me, ſhalt in thine old age be girt "by others, and forced to ſtretch out "thy hands againſt thy will, in a "very different manner, for the ſake "of thy conſtant profeſſion of my "religion."

By theſe laſt words Jeſus ſignified the manner of Peter's death, and that he ſhould finally ſuffer martyrdom for the glory of God, and the teſtimony of the truth of the Chriſtian religion.

The time being now come when the diſciples were to meet their great Lord and Maſter, according to the meſſages he had ſent them by the women, and in all probability appointed at ſome former appearance not mentioned by the Evangeliſts, the brethren ſet out for the mountain in Galilee, perhaps that on which he was tranſfigured. Here five hundred of them were gathered

joyful ſight of their great Maſter, after he had triumphed over death and the grave; ſome of them not having yet ſeen him after his reſurrection.

They did not wait long before Jeſus appeared; on which they were ſeized with rapture, their hearts overflowed with gladneſs, they approached their kind, their benevolent maſter, and worſhipped him. Some few indeed doubted; it being a thing agreeable to nature for men to be afraid to believe what they vehemently wiſh, leſt they ſhould indulge themſelves in falſe joys, which vaniſh like a morning-cloud. But Jeſus afterwards appeared frequently to them, and gave all of them full ſatisfaction, and inſtructed them in many things relating to their preaching the Goſpel, eſtabliſhing the church, and ſpreading it thro' the whole earth.

In all probability our bleſſed Saviour, either at his appearance on the mountain, or ſome ſubſequent appearance not mentioned by the Evangeliſts, ordered them to return to Jeruſalem, as he propoſed to aſcend viſibly into heaven from the top of the mount of Olives.

CHAP. XLIII.

Jeſus aſcends into heaven. The principal arguments of the deiſts againſt our bleſſed Saviour's reſurrection conſidered and refuted. Reflections on the life and doctrine of our great Redeemer.

TEN or twelve days before the feaſt of Pentecoſt, called in the law *the feaſt of weeks*, and about forty days after our bleſſed Saviour aroſe from the dead, the diſciples repaired to Jeruſalem, probably in conformity to a command given them by their great Maſter at one of his appearances; unleſs we ſuppoſed they went up to that city, in order to purify and prepare themſelves for the approaching ſolemnity.

But however that be, here the bleſſed Jeſus made his laſt appearance to his apoſtles; and after inſtructing them in many particulars concerning the kingdom of God, and the manner they were to behave themſelves in propagating the doctrine of the Goſpel, he put them in mind that, during his abode with them in Galilee, he had often told them, that all things written in the law, the prophets, and the pſalms concerning him, were to be exactly accompliſhed. At the ſame time, *he opened their underſtandings*; that is, he removed their prejudices by the operation of his ſpirit, cleared their doubts, improved their memories, ſtrengthened their judgments, and enabled them to diſcern the true meaning of the ſcriptures.

Having thus qualified them for receiving the truth, he again aſſured them that both Moſes and the prophets had foretold that the Meſſiah was to ſuffer in the very manner he had ſuffered; that he was to riſe from the dead on the third day as he had done; and that repentance and remiſſion of ſins was to be preached in the Meſſiah's name among all nations, beginning with the Jews.

He next delivered unto them their commiſſion to preach the doctrine of repentance and remiſſion of ſins in his name among all nations,

and to teſtify unto the world the exact accompliſhment in him of all things foretold concerning the Meſſiah: and, to enable them to perform this important work, promiſed to beſtow on them the miraculous gifts of the ſpirit, which he called the promiſe of his father; becauſe the Almighty had promiſed them by his prophets.

Having thus fortified them for the important work they were going to undertake, he led them on to the mount of Olives as far as Bethany; where, ſtanding on a hill above the town, he told them that he was now raiſed to the government of heaven and earth: for which reaſon they might go courageouſly through all the world, and preach the Goſpel to every rational creature; aſſuring themſelves that affairs in all countries ſhould be ſo ordered, as to diſpoſe the inhabitants for the reception of the Goſpel: that they who believed were to be admitted into his church by the rite of baptiſm, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghoſt; and to be taught, in conſequence of their baptiſm, to obey all the precepts he had enjoined them: that ſuch baptized believers ſhould receive the pardon of their ſins, together with eternal life in the happy manſions of his Father's kingdom; but that thoſe who refuſed to embrace the doctrines of the Goſpel ſhould be for ever excluded thoſe happy regions, and have their portion in the lake that burneth with fire and brimſtone: that while they were employed in this work, he would be with them to the end of the world, to guide them by his counſel, to aſſiſt them by his ſpirit, and to protect them by his providence. Finally, that thoſe who ſhould, thro' their preaching, be induced to believe, ſhould themſelves work moſt aſtoniſhing miracles, by which the Goſpel ſhould be propagated with the greateſt rapidity.

When the bleſſed Jeſus had ſpoken theſe things, he lifted up his hands and bleſſed them. And in the action of bleſſing them, he was parted from them in the midſt of the day, a ſhining cloud receiving him out of their ſight; that is, this brilliant cloud encompaſſed him about, and carried him up to heaven: not ſuddenly, but at leiſure, that they might behold him departing, and ſee the proof of his having come down from heaven as he had promiſed them, John xvi. 28.

The cloud in which the bleſſed Jeſus aſcended was more bright and pure than the cleareſt lambent flame, being no other than the Shechinah, or glory of the Lord; the viſible ſymbol of the Divine preſence which had ſo often appeared to the patriarchs of old; which filled the temple at its dedication, and which, in its greateſt ſplendor, cannot be beheld with mortal eyes; for which reaſon it is called the light inacceſſible in which the Almighty reſides.

On this occaſion probably it was that our Lord's body was changed, acquiring the glories of immortality, perhaps in the preſence of his diſciples, who ſtedfaſtly beheld him as he mounted from the earth. And as he aſcended, the flaming cloud that ſurrounded him marked his paſſage through the air, but gradually loſt its magnitude in the eyes of thoſe who ſtood below; till

till at last it vanished, together with their beloved Master, out of their sight; for he was received up where the Deity manifests himself in a peculiar manner, and was set down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; all power in heaven and in earth being now given him; and this universal government he will hold, till he establishes the dominion of righteousness, when he will deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, *that God may be all in all.*

In this illustrious manner did the great Redeemer of mankind depart, after having finished the grand work which he left the bosom of his father to execute; a work which God himself, in the remotest eternity, contemplated with pleasure, which angels with joy descried as to happen, and which through all eternity to come shall, at periods the most immensely distant from the time of its execution, be looked back upon with inexpressible delight by every inhabitant of heaven; for though the minute affairs of time may vanish altogether and be lost, when they are removed far back by the endless progression of duration, this object is such that no distance however great can lessen t The kingdom of heaven is erected on the incarnation and sufferings of the Son of God, the kingdom and city of the Almighty comprehending all the virtuous beings in the universe, made happy by goodness and love; and therefore none of them can ever forget the foundation on which their happiness stands established. The human species in particular, recovered by the labour of the Son of God, will view their deliverer, and look back on his stupendous undertaking with the highest rapture, while they are feasting without interruption on its delicious fruits. The rest of the members likewise of the city of God will contemplate it with perpetual pleasure, as the happy means of recovering their kindred that were lost; and possibly the grand confirmation of the whole rational system, in their subjection to him who reigneth for ever, and whose favour is better than life itself.

Thus have I followed our dear Redeemer through all the transactions of his life, and enlarged on the stupendous miracle of his resurrection, as the whole christian doctrine is founded on that glorious event. And from this history it is abundantly evident that our blessed Saviour shewed himself to his disciples and friends only, not to the Jews in general. This circumstance gave Spinoza a pretence for raising an objection which his disciples have considered as the strongest argument against our Lord's resurrection. "If, say they, he "really arose from the dead, to have "shewed himself to his enemies as "well as to his friends would have "put the truth of his resurrection "beyond all doubt, than which no"thing could be more necessary to "the cause of Christianity: and "therefore the supposition of his "having confined his appearances "after his resurrection to a few select "friends renders the affair extremely "suspicious and improbable."

But this argument, however plauſible it may appear at firſt ſight, is deſtitute of the leaſt force; becauſe it may be demonſtrated, that if Jeſus had ſhewed himſelf to his enemies, and to all the people in general, theſe appearances, inſtead of putting the truth of his reſurrection beyond all doubt, would have weakened the evidence of it, at leaſt in after-ages; and, conſequently, have been of infinite prejudice to mankind: for upon the ſuppoſition that our bleſſed Saviour had ſhewed himſelf openly, one of theſe two things muſt neceſſarily have happened: Either his enemies, ſubmitting to the evidence of their ſenſes, would have believed his reſurrection; or, reſiſting that evidence, they would reject it altogether. I ſhall begin with conſidering the latter.

Thoſe enemies of the great Redeemer of mankind who reſiſted the evidence of their ſenſes, or who, though really convinced, would not acknowledge their conviction, muſt have juſtified their diſbelief by affirming that the perſon who appeared to them, as riſen from the dead, was not Jeſus whom the Roman governor had crucified, but an impoſtor who perſonated him. On any other foundation their infidelity would have been ridiculous and abſurd; but, if the unbelieving Jews by our Lord's appearing perſonally to them, would have been laid under a neceſſity of denying the reality of his reſurrection, even though perſuaded of it in their own minds, the evidence of fact could have gained nothing by ſuch publick appearances; becauſe the generality of the Jews were not capable of paſſing a judgment upon the falſhood which Chriſt's enemies muſt have made uſe of to ſupport their denial of his reſurrection. Being unacquainted with Jeſus, they could not certainly tell whether he was really the very perſon whom the Romans had crucified. His apoſtles, diſciples, and acquaintance, who, by their long attendance on him, knew his ſtature, ſhape, air, voice, and manner, were the only proper perſons by whoſe determination the point in diſpute could be decided: conſequently, if our Lord had appeared to all the people, if any conſiderable number of his enemies had continued in their infidelity, the whole ſtreſs of the evidence of his reſurrection muſt have reſted on the evidence of the very perſons who, according to the plan pitched upon by Providence, bear witneſs to it now, and upon whoſe teſtimony the world has believed it. So that, inſtead of gaining an additional evidence by the propoſed method of ſhewing Jeſus publickly to all the people, we ſhould have had nothing to truſt to but the teſtimony of his diſciples, and that clogged with this incumbrance, that his reſurrection was denied by many to whom he appeared, and who were not convinced thereby.

But, in the ſecond place, it may be ſuppoſed, that in caſe our bleſſed Saviour had ſhewed himſelf publickly, the whole nation of the Jews muſt have believed; and that future generations would thus have had the fulleſt evidence of the truth of his reſurrection.

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This, however, will not appear to be the caſe, if we conſider, that the greateſt part of our Lord's enemies having not given themſelves the trouble of attending him often, cannot be ſuppoſed to have been ſo well acquainted with his perſon as to know him with certainty. For which reaſon, tho' he had ſhewed himſelf to them, even their belief of his reſurrection muſt in a great meaſure have depended on the teſtimony of his diſciples and friends. If ſo, it is not very probable that his appearing publickly would have had any great effect on the Jews, to perſuade them to embrace a crucified Meſſiah. It is far more reaſonable to believe, that they would have rejected the whole, and continued in their infidelity.

But to give the argument all the force the Deiſts can deſire, let us ſuppoſe, that, in conſequence of our bleſſed Saviour's appearing to all the people of the Jews, the nation in general would have been convinced of the truth of his reſurrection, and become his diſciples; what advantage would the cauſe of Chriſtianity have reaped from ſuch effects of our Lord's public appearance? Would the evidence of his reſurrection have become thereby the more unqueſtionable? Or would the modern infidels have been the better diſpoſed to believe in this crucified Jeſus? By no means. For we do not find that men of this claſs are at all the more ready to believe the miracles of Moſes in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in the Wilderneſs, becauſe the whole nation were witneſſes of them. The truth is, had our bleſſed Redeemer perſuaded all the people of the Jews, by appearing perſonally to them, the objections againſt his reſurrection would have been ten times more numerous and forcible then they are at preſent; for would not the whole have been called a ſtate-trick, a Jewiſh fable, a mere political contrivance, to patch up their broken credit, after they had ſo long talked of a Meſſiah, who was to come at that time? Beſides, we ſhould certainly have been told, that the government being engaged in the plot, a fraud of this kind might have eaſily been carried on, eſpecially as the people in general would eagerly fall in with it; becauſe it was ſo exactly adapted to their prejudices, and becauſe the few who had ſagacity enough to detect the fraud, could have no opportunity of examining into it. Or, if they did examine and detect the fraud, would not have dared to make any diſcovery of it, in oppoſition to the whole weight of the ſtate: ſo that they would let it paſs quietly, without once calling it in queſtion.

To ſay the truth, the reſurrection of our great Redeemer univerſally believed among the Jews, and publiſhed to the world by the unanimous voice of the nation, would have been liable to an infinite number of objections, which are all effectually cut off by the ſcheme made choice of by the wiſdom of Providence; for as the people in general, and the rulers in particular continued in their infidelity, the perſons concerned in this ſuppoſed fraud, muſt have carried it on under the greateſt diſad-

vantages. The reaſon is, that inſtead of making many friends to aſſiſt them, which a fraud of this kind requires, all men were their enemies, and intereſted to diſcover the cheat. The Jewiſh rules, in particular, gave all poſſible encouragement to make the ſtricteſt ſcrutiny into the fact, and into all its circumſtances; and many doubtleſs zealouſly made the enquiry with the utmoſt exactneſs. The apoſtles who preached the reſurrection expoſed themſelves to the fierceſt reſentment of the men in power; becauſe the reſurrection of our great Redeemer caſt the greateſt reflection upon thoſe who had put him to death. It ſhould alſo be remembered, that if the generality of the nation had not continued in their unbelief, the apoſtles, who preached the reſurrection, would not have ſuffered theſe perſecutions which in every country were raiſed againſt them, chiefly by the Jews; and conſequently one of the ſtrongeſt arguments for the truth of their teſtimony would have been wanting: whereas by their having been perſecuted to death for their preaching the reſurrection of their great Maſter, they fully demonſtrated how ſincerely they believed the great fact which they preached in continual jeopardy of their lives.

Thus have I endeavoured to anſwer, in the plaineſt and moſt ſatisfactory manner, the principal objection made by the Deiſts againſt the truth of our bleſſed Saviour's reſurrection: and ſhall conclude this chapter with a few reflections on the life of the bleſſed Jeſus; a life the greateſt and beſt that was ever led by man, or was ever the ſubject of any hiſtory ſince the univerſe was called from its original chaos, by the powerful word of the Almighty.

The human character of the bleſſed Jeſus as it reſults from the accounts given of him by the Evangeliſts, for they have not formally drawn it up, is entirely different from that of all other men whatſover; for whereas they have ſelfiſh paſſions deeply rooted in their breaſts, and are influenced by them in almoſt every thing they do, Jeſus was ſo entirely free from them, that the moſt ſevere ſcrutiny cannot furniſh one ſingle action in the whole courſe of his life wherein he conſulted his own intereſt only. No; he was influenced by very different motives: the preſent happineſs and eternal welfare of ſinners regulated his conduct; and while others followed their reſpective occupations, Jeſus had no other buſineſs than that of promoting the happineſs of the ſons of men. Nor did he wait till he was ſollicited to extend his benevolent hand to the diſtreſſed: *he went about doing good*, and alway accounted it *more bleſſed to give than to receive*; reſembling God rather than man.

It is common for perſons of the moſt exalted faculties to be elated with ſucceſs and applauſe, or dejected by cenſure and diſappointments: but the bleſſed Jeſus was never elevated by the one, nor depreſſed by the other. He was never more courageous than when he met with the greateſt oppoſition and cruel treatment; nor more humble than when the

the ſons of men worſhipped at his feet. He came into the world inſpired with the grandeſt purpoſe that ever was formed, that of ſaving from eternal perdition, not a ſingle nation, but the whole world; and in the execution of it went through the longeſt and heavieſt train of labours that ever was ſuſtained, with a conſtancy and reſolution, on which no diſadvantageous impreſſion could be made by any accident whatever. Calumny, threatnings, bad ſucceſs, with many other evils conſtantly attending him, ſerved only to quicken his endeavours in this glorious enterpriſe, which he unweariedly purſued even till he finiſhed it by his death.

The generality of mankind are prone to retaliate injuries received, and all ſeem to take a ſatisfaction in complaining of the cruelties of thoſe who oppreſs them; whereas the whole of Chriſt's labours breathed nothing but meekneſs, patience, and forgiveneſs even to his bittereſt enemies, and in the midſt of the moſt excruciating torments. The words *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*, uttered by him when his enemies were nailing him to the croſs, fitly expreſs the temper which he maintained thro' the whole courſe of his life, even when aſſaulted by the heavieſt provocations. The truth is, he never ſignified, on any occaſion, the leaſt reſentment by ſpeech or action, nor indeed any emotion of mind whatever, except ſuch as flowed from pity and charity; conſequently ſuch only as expreſſed the deepeſt concern for the welfare of mankind.

To conclude: the greateſt and beſt men have had their failings, which tarniſh the luſtre of their virtues, and ſhew them to have been nothing more than men. This was the caſe with Noah, Abraham, Moſes, Job, David, Paul, and other heroes celebrated in hiſtory: but it was otherwiſe with Jeſus. He was ſuperior to all the men that ever lived, both with regard to the purity of his manners and the perfection of his virtues. He was holy, harmleſs, undefiled, and ſeparated from ſinners. Whether we conſider him as a teacher, or as a man, *he did no ſin; neither was guile found in his mouth.* His whole life was perfectly free from ſpot or weakneſs, at the ſame time it was remarkable for the greateſt and extenſive exerciſes of virtue. But never to have committed the leaſt ſin in word or in deed, never to have uttered any ſentiment that could be cenſured, upon the various topicks of religion and morality which were the daily ſubjects of his diſcourſes, and that through the courſe of a life filled with action, and led under the obſervation of many enemies, who had always acceſs to converſe with him, and who often came to find fault, is a pitch of perfection evidently above the reach of human nature; and conſequently he who poſſeſſed it muſt have been divine.

Such was the perſon who is the ſubject of the Evangelical hiſtory. If the reader, by reviewing his life, doctrine and miracles, as they are here repreſented to him united in one ſeries, has a clearer idea of theſe things than before, or obſerves a

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beauty in his actions thus linked together, which taken ſeparately do not appear ſo fully: if he feels himſelf touched by the character of Jeſus in general, or with any of his ſermons and actions in particular, thus ſimply delineated in writing, whoſe principal charms are the beauties of truth: above all, if his dying ſo generouſly for men, ſtrikes him with admiration, or fills him with joy, in the proſpect of that pardon which is thereby purchaſed for the world; let him ſeriouſly conſider with himſelf what improvement he ought to make of the divine goodneſs.

Jeſus, by his death, hath ſet open the gates of immortality to the ſons of men; and by his word, ſpirit and example, graciouſly offers to make them meet for the glorious rewards in the kingdom of the heavenly Canaan, and to conduct them into the inheritance of the ſaints in light: let us therefore remember, that, being born under the diſpenſation of his Goſpel, we have, from our earlieſt years, enjoyed the beſt means of acquiring wiſdom, virtue, and happineſs, the lineaments of the image of God. We have been called to aſpire after an exaltation to the nature and felicity of the Almighty exhibited to mortal eyes in the man Chriſt Jeſus, to fire us with the nobleſt ambition. His Goſpel teaches us that we are made for eternity; and that our preſent life is to our future exiſtence, as infancy is to manhood. But as in the former many things are to be learned, many hardſhips to be endured, many habits to be acquired, and that by a tedious courſe of exerciſes, which in themſelves though painful, and poſſibly uſeleſs to the child, yet are neceſſary to fit him for the buſineſs and enjoyments of manhood: ſo while we remain in this infancy of human life, things are to be learned, hardſhips to be endured, and habits to be acquired by a laborious courſe of diſcipline, which however painful muſt be undergone, becauſe neceſſary to fit us for the employments and pleaſures of our riper exiſtence in the realms above. Our heavenly Father, ever mindful of us, hath ſent down his only begotten Son, the expreſs image of his own perſon, to initiate us into, and enable us to complete an education neceſſary for eternity. Enflamed therefore with the love of immortality and its joys, let us ſubmit ourſelves to our heavenly Teacher, and learn of him thoſe graces which alone can render life pleaſant, death deſirable, and fill eternity with ecſtatic joys.

CHAP. XLIV.

Obſervations on the doctrine of our bleſſed Saviour, the excellency of his religion, and the reaſonableneſs and pleaſure of the chriſtian life.

IT cannot be thought an improper concluſion to the life of the bleſſed Jeſus, *the author and finiſher of our faith*, to place the great doctrines taught by the benevolent Son of the moſt High in a proper light, remove a few prejudices which ſome, I fear too many, have formed againſt the religion of the holy Jeſus, and ſhew that

that his *yoke is eaſy, and his burden is light.*

None perhaps have been greater enemies to the progreſs of religion than thoſe who delineate it in a gloomy and terrifying form: nor any guilty of a more injurious calumny againſt the goſpel, than thoſe who repreſent its precepts as rigorous impoſitions and unneceſſary reſtraints. True religion is the perfection of human nature, and the foundation of uniform exalted pleaſure; of publick order and private happineſs. Chriſtianity is the moſt excellent and the moſt uſeful inſtitution, having *the promiſe of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.* It is the voice of reaſon; it is alſo the language of ſcripture; *the ways* of wiſdom *are ways of pleaſantneſs, and all her paths are peace*; and our bleſſed Saviour himſelf aſſures us, that his precepts are eaſy, and the burden of his religion light.

The chriſtian religion is a rational ſervice, a worſhip *in ſpirit and truth*; a worſhip worthy of the majeſty of the Almighty to receive, and of the nature of man to pay. One of its important branches is natural religion, reinforced by additional motives and new diſcoveries: its poſitive rights are few, of plain and eaſy ſignificancy, and manifeſtly adapted to eſtabliſh a ſenſe of moral obligations. The goſpel places religion not in abſtruſe ſpeculation and metaphyſical ſubtleties; not in outward ſhew and tedious ceremony; not in ſuperſtitious auſterities and enthuſiaſtick viſion, but in purity of heart, and holineſs of life. The ſum of our duty, according to our great Maſter himſelf, conſiſts in the *love of God*, and *of our neighbour*; according to St. Paul in *denying ungodlineſs and worldly luſts*; and in *living ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly, in this preſent world*; according to St. James, in *viſiting the fatherleſs and widows in affliction*, and in *keeping ourſelves unſpotted from the world.* This is the conſtant ſtrain and tenor of the goſpel. This it inculcates moſt earneſtly, and on this it lays the greateſt ſtreſs.

But is the chriſtian ſcheme only a republication of the law of nature, or merely a refined ſyſtem of morality? No certainly; it is a great deal more. It is an act of grace, a ſtupendous plan of providence, deſigned for the recovery of mankind from a ſtate of degradation and ruin to the favour of the Almighty, and to the hopes of a happy immortality thro' a Mediator. Under this diſpenſation, true religion conſiſts in a *repentance towards God*, and *in faith in the Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, as the perſon appointed by the ſupreme authority of heaven and earth to reconcile apoſtate man to his offended Creator; as a ſacrifice for ſin; our vital head, and governing Lord. This is religion as we are chriſtians. And what hardſhip, what exaction is there in all this? Surely none. Nay, the practice of religion is much eaſier than the ſervitude of ſin.

Our rational powers all will readily agree are impaired, and the ſoul weakened by ſin. The animal paſſions are ſtrong and apt to oppoſe the dictates of reaſon: objects of

ſenſe make powerful impreſſions on the mind. We are, in every ſituation, ſurrounded with many ſnares and temptations. In ſuch a diſordered ſtate of things, to maintain a courſe of ſtrict piety and uncorrupted virtue, is a work of great difficulty. There are, however, many tender propenſions and generous inſtincts interwoven with our very being, as reſtraints from vice, and incitements to virtue. The gracious Author of nature has planted in the human breaſt, a quick ſenſe of good and evil; a faculty which ſtrongly dictates right and wrong: and tho', by the ſtrength of appetite and warmth of paſſion, men are often hurried into immoral practices; yet in the beginning, eſpecially when there has been the advantage of a good education, it is uſually with reluctance and oppoſition of mind. What inward ſtruggles precede, what bitter pangs attend their ſinful exceſſes! What guilty bluſhes and uneaſy fears! What frightful proſpects and pale reviews! *Terrors are upon them, and a fire not blown conſumeth them. To make a mock at ſin*, and to commit iniquity without remorſe, is an attainment that requires length of time, and much painful labour; more labour than is requiſite to attain that habitual goodneſs which is the glory of the man, the ornament of the chriſtian, his preparation for heaven, and the chief ſource of his happineſs there. The ſoul can no more be reconciled to flagrant acts of wickedneſs and injuſtice, than the body to exceſs, but by ſuffering many bitter pains and cruel attacks.

The mouth of conſcience may indeed be ſtopped for a while by falſe principles: its ſecret whiſpers may be drowned by the noiſe of company, and ſtifled by entertainments of ſenſe; but this principle of conſcience is ſo deeply rooted in human nature, and, at the ſame time, her voice is ſo clear and ſtrong, that all the ſinners arts will be unable to lull her into a laſting ſecurity. When the hour of calamity arrives; when ſickneſs ſeizeth, and death approacheth the ſinner, conſcience conſtrains him to liſten to her accuſations, and will not ſuffer the temples of his head to take any reſt. *There is no peace to the wicked:* the foundations of peace are ſubverted, they are at utter enmity with their reaſon, with their conſcience, and with their God.

Not ſo is the caſe of true religion. Conſcience is on her ſide: reaſon pleads for her, and intereſt joins in the recommendation.

When religion pure and genuine forms the temper, and governs the life, conſcience applauds, and peace takes her reſidence in the breaſt. The ſoul is in its proper ſtate. There is order and regularity both in the faculties and actions. Conſcious of its own integrity, and ſecure of the divine approbation, the ſoul enjoys a calmneſs not to be deſcribed. But why do I call this happy frame calmneſs only? It is far more than mere calmneſs. The air may be calm, and the day overcaſt with thick miſts and dark clouds. The pious and virtuous mind reſembles a ſerene day, enlightened and enlivened with the brighteſt rays of the ſun. Tho' all

all without may be clouds and darkneſs, there is light in the heart of a pious man. *He is ſatisfied from himſelf*, and is *filled with peace and joy in believing*. In the concluding ſcene, the awful moment of diſſolution, all is peaceful and ſerene. The immortal part quits its tenement of clay with the well-grounded hopes of aſcending to happineſs and glory.

Nor does the goſpel enjoin any duty but what is fit and reaſonable. It calls upon all its profeſſors to practiſe reverence, ſubmiſſion, and gratitude to God; juſtice, truth, and univerſal benevolence to men; and to maintain the government of our own minds. And what has any one to object againſt this? From the leaſt to the greateſt commandment of our dear Redeemer, there is not one which impartial reaſon can find fault with. *His law is perfect; his precepts are true, and righteous altogether.* Not even thoſe excepted, which require us *to love our enemies*, to *deny ourſelves*, and to *take up our croſs*. To forgive an injury is more generous and manly than to revenge it; to controul a licentious appetite than to indulge it; to ſuffer poverty, reproach, and even death itſelf, in the ſacred cauſe of truth and integrity, is much wiſer and better, than, by baſe compliances, to make *ſhipwreck of faith and a good conſcience*. Thus in a ſtorm at ſea, or a conflagration on the land, a man with pleaſure abandons his lumber to ſecure his jewels. Piety and virtue are the wiſeſt and moſt reaſonable things in the world; vice and wickedneſs the moſt irrational and abſurd.

The all-wiſe Author of our being hath ſo framed our natures, and placed us in ſuch relations, that there is nothing vicious but what is injurious; nothing virtuous but what is advantageous to our preſent intereſt, both with reſpect to body and mind. Meekneſs and humility, patience and univerſal charity, are graces which give a joy *unknown to tranſgreſſors*. The divine virtues of truth and equity are the only bands of friendſhip, the only ſupports of ſociety. Temperance and ſobriety are the beſt preſervatives of health and ſtrength; but ſin and debauchery impair the body, conſume the ſubſtance, reduce to poverty, and form the direct path to an immature and untimely death. Now this is the chief excellency of all laws; and what will always render their burden pleaſant and delightful is, that they enjoin nothing unbecoming or injurious.

Beſides, to render our duty eaſy, we have the example, as well as the commands of the bleſſed Jeſus. The maſters of morality among the heathen gave excellent rules for the regulation of men's manners; but they wanted either the honeſty or the courage to try their own arguments upon themſelves. It was a ſtrong preſumption that the yoke of the Scribes and Phariſees was grievous, when they laid *heavy burdens upon men's ſhoulders*, which they themſelves refuſed to touch with one of their fingers. Not thus our great law-giver Jeſus Chriſt the righteous. His behaviour was, in all reſpects, conformable to his doctrine. His devotion towards God, how ſublime

and ardent! benevolence towards men, how great and diffuſive! He was in his life an exact pattern of innocence: for he *did no ſin; neither was guile found in his mouth.* In the Son of God incarnate is exhibited the brighteſt, the faireſt reſemblance of the Father, that earth or heaven ever beheld; an example peculiarly perſuaſive, calculated to inſpire reſolution, and to animate us to uſe our utmoſt endeavours to imitate the divine pattern, the example of *the author and finiſher of our faith,* of him *who loved us, and gave himſelf for us.* Our profeſſion and character as chriſtians oblige us to make this example the model of our lives. Every motive of decency, gratitude, and intereſt conſtrain as to tread the paths he trod before us.

We ſhould alſo remember that our burden is eaſy; becauſe God, who *knoweth whereof we are made,* who *conſidereth that we are but duſt,* is ever ready to aſſiſt us. The heathen ſages themſelves had ſome notions of this aſſiſtance, tho' guided only by the glimmering lamp of reaſon. But what they looked upon as probable, the Goſpel clearly and ſtrongly aſſerts. We there hear the apoſtle exhorting, *Let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.* We there hear the bleſſed Jeſus himſelf arguing in this convincing manner: *If ye being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more ſhall your heavenly Father give the holy ſpirit to them that aſk him?*

I would not here be underſtood to mean, that the agency of the ſpirit is irreſiſtible, and lays a neceſſitating biaſs on all the faculties and affections. Were this the caſe, precepts and prohibitions, promiſes and threatnings, would ſignify nothing; and duty and obligation would be words without a meaning. The ſpirit aſſiſteth in a manner agreeable to the frame of human nature; not controuling the free uſe of reaſon, but by aſſiſting the underſtanding, influencing the will, and moderating the affections. But tho' we may not be able to explain the mode of his operations, the ſcriptures warrant us to aſſert, that, when men are renewed and prepared for heaven, it is *through ſanctification of the ſpirit,* and *belief of the truth.* How enlivening the thought! how encouraging the motive! We are not left to ſtruggle alone with the difficulties which attend the practice of virtue in the preſent imperfect ſtate. The merciful Father of our Spirits is ever near to help our infirmities, to enlighten the underſtanding, to ſtrengthen good reſolutions, and, in concurrence with our own endeavours, to make us conquerors over all oppoſition. Faithful is he to his promiſes, and will not ſuffer the ſincere and well-diſpoſed to be tempted above what they are able to bear. What can be deſired more than this? To promote the virtue and happineſs of his moral offſpring, the ſupreme parent hath done all that is conſiſtent with the holineſs of his nature, and the free agency of man: if then we are not virtuous and happy, it is our own faults, and we are utterly inexcuſable.

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We ſhould alſo remember that the great doctrine of the Goſpel concerning the propitious mercy of God to all penitents through Chriſt Jeſus greatly contributes to the eaſe and pleaſure of a religious life. Let it be granted, that the hope of pardon is eſſential to the religion of fallen creatures, and one of its firſt principles; yet, conſidering the doubts and ſuſpicions which are apt to ariſe in a mind conſcious of guilt, it is undoubtedly a great, an ineſtimable favour, to be relieved in this reſpect by a meſſenger from Omnipotence himſelf. This is our happineſs. We are not left to depend upon conſequential reaſonings, which the bulk of mankind are little uſed to; but we are aſſured, that, upon our true repentance, we ſhall, *through the mediation of Chriſt*, receive the *full remiſſion of paſt ſins*, and be reſtored to the ſame ſtate and favour with our Maker, as if we had never tranſgreſſed his laws. Here the Goſpel triumphs. With theſe aſſurances it abounds. Upon this head the declarations of our bleſſed Saviour and his Apoſtles are ſo expreſs and full, that every one who believes them, and knows himſelf to be a true penitent, muſt baniſh every doubt and fear, and rejoice with joy unſpeakable. *Come to me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you reſt*, Matt. xi. 28. *All manner of ſin and blaſphemy ſhall be forgiven unto men*, xii. 31. *Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveneſs of ſins; and by him all that believe are juſtified from all things, from whichwe could not be juſtified by the law of Moſes*, Acts xiii. 38, 39. *The blood of Jeſus cleanſeth from all ſin*, John i. 7. What grace and favour is this! who can dwell upon the tranſporting theme too long! Now our way is plain before us, and the burden we are to bear is made eaſy. No ſins are unpardonable, if repented and forſaken.

Conſider this all ye who have never yet regarded religion, but purſued a courſe of vice and ſenſuality all your lives long. Though your conduct has been baſe to the laſt degree, your caſe is not deſperate. Far from it. The God whom you have ſo highly offended commiſerates your errors, is ever ready to extend his pardoning mercy to his moſt degenerate creatures upon their repentance and reformation, and *is in Chriſt Jeſus reconciling the world to himſelf, not imputing unto* penitent *ſinners their treſpaſſes*, 2 Cor. v. 10. *Let the wicked* therefore *forſake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord*, who will ſo liberally extend his mercy to him *and to our God*, who will thus *abundantly pardon*, Iſaiah lv. 7.

Another particular which renders the chriſtian religion eaſy and delightful, is its leading us to the perfect, eternal life of heaven. It cannot be denied but that we may draw from the light of nature ſtrong preſumptions of a future ſtate. The preſent exiſtence does not look like an entire ſcene, but rather like the infancy of human nature, which is capable of arriving at a much higher degree of maturity. But whatever ſolid foundation the doctrine of a fu-

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future ſtate may have in nature and reaſon, certain it is, that thro' the habitual neglect of reflection, and the force of irregular paſſions, this doctrine was, before the coming of our bleſſed Saviour, very much diſfigured, and, in a great meaſure, loſt among the ſons of men.

In the heathen world, a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments was a matter of mere ſpeculation and uncertainty, ſometimes hoped for, ſometimes doubted of, and ſometimes abſolutely denied. The law of Moſes, tho' of divine original, is chiefly inforced by promiſes of temporal bleſſings; and, even in the writings of the prophets, a future immortality is very ſparingly mentioned, and obſcurely repreſented: but the doctrine of our Saviour hath *brought life and immortality to light*. In the goſpel we have a diſtinct account of another world, attended with many engaging circumſtances; about which the deciſions of reaſon were dark and confuſed. We have the teſtimony of the author of our religion, who was raiſed from the dead, and who afterwards, in the preſence of his diſciples, aſcended into heaven. In the new teſtament it is expreſſly declared, that good men, *when abſent from the body, are preſent with the Lord*. Here we are aſſured of the reſurrection of the body in a glorious form, cloathed with immortal vigour, ſuited to the active nature of the animating ſpirit, and aſſiſting its moſt enlarged operations and inceſſant progreſs towards perfection. Here we are aſſured, that *the righteous ſhall go into life everlaſting*; that they ſhall enter into the kingdom of the heavenly Canaan, where no ignorance ſhall cloud the underſtanding, no vice diſturb the will. In theſe regions of perfection, nothing but love ſhall poſſeſs the ſoul; nothing but gratitude employ the tongue: there the righteous ſhall be united to an *innumerable company of angels*, and to *the general aſſembly and church of the firſt born*: there they ſhall ſee their exalted Redeemer at the right hand of Omnipotence, and *ſit down with him on his throne*: there they ſhall be admitted into the immediate preſence of the ſupreme fountain of life and happineſs, and, beholding his face, be *changed into the ſame image from glory to glory*.—Here language—here imagination fails me! It requires the genius, the knowledge, and the pen of an angel, to paint the happineſs, the bliſsful ſcene of the new Jeruſalem, which human eyes cannot behold till this mortal body ſhall be purified from its corruption, and dreſſed in the robes of immortality. *Eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart to conceive the joys which God hath prepared for them that love him.*—What is the Elyſium of the heathen compared with the heaven of the chriſtians? The hope, the proſpect of this is ſufficient to reconcile us to all the difficulties that may attend our progreſs, ſweeten all our labours, alleviate every grief, and ſilence every murmur.

But why, ſays the libertine in the gaiety of his heart, ſhould there be any difficulties, or reſtraint at all? God hath made nothing in vain. The appetites he hath planted in the human

man breaſt are to be gratified. To deny, or to reſtrain them, is ignominious bondage: but to give full ſcope to every deſire and paſſion of the heart without check or controul is true manly freedom.

In oppoſition to this looſe and careleſs way of reaſoning, let it be conſidered, that the liberty of a rational creature doth not conſiſt in an entire exemption from all controul, but in following the dictates of reaſon as the governing principle, and in keeping the various paſſions in due ſubordination. To follow the regular motion of thoſe affections which the wiſe Creator hath implanted within us, is our duty: but as our natural deſires in this ſtate of trial are often irregular, we are bound to reſtrain their exceſſes, and not to indulge them, but in a ſtrict ſubſerviency to the integrity and peace of our minds, and to the order and happineſs of human ſociety eſtabliſhed in the world. They who allow the ſupreme command to be uſurped by ſenſe and brutal appetite may *promiſe themſelves liberty*, but are truly and abſolutely the *ſervants of corruption*. To be vicious is to be enſlaved. We behold with pity thoſe miſerable objects that are chained in the gallies, or confined in dark priſons and loathſome dungeons: but much more abject and vile is the ſlavery of the ſinner! No ſlavery of the body is equal to the bondage of the mind: no chains preſs ſo cloſely, or gall ſo cruelly as the fetters of ſin, which corrode the very ſubſtance of the ſoul, and fret every faculty.

It muſt indeed be confeſſed, that there are ſome profligates ſo hardened by cuſtom as to be paſt all feeling; and, becauſe inſenſible of their bondage, boaſt of this inſenſibility as a mark of their native freedom, and of their happineſs. Vain men! they might extol, with equal propriety the peculiar happineſs of an apoplexy, or the profound tranquility of a lethargy.

Thus have I endeavoured to place in a plain and conſpicuous light ſome of the peculiar excellencies of the chriſtian religion: and from hence many uſeful reflections will naturally ariſe in the mind of every attentive reader. It is the religion of Jeſus that hath removed idolatry and ſuperſtition, and brought immortality to light when concealed under a veil of darkneſs almoſt impenetrable. This hath ſet the great truths of religion in a clear and conſpicuous point of view, and propoſed new and powerful motives to influence our minds, and to determine our conduct. Nothing is enjoined to be believed, but what is worthy of God; nothing to be practiſed but what is friendly to man. All the doctrines of the Goſpel are rational and conſiſtent: all its precepts are truly wiſe, juſt, and good. The Goſpel contains nothing grievous to an ingenuous mind: it debars us from nothing but doing harm to ourſelves or to our fellow-creatures; and permits us to range any where but in the paths of danger and deſtruction. It only requires us to act up to the dignity of the rational nature, and to prefer to the vaniſhing pleaſures of ſin, the ſmiles of a reconciled

God, and *an eternal weight of glory*. And is this a rigorous exaction, a heavy burden not to be endured? How can ſinful mortals harbour ſo unworthy a thought?

Surely no man who is a real friend to the cauſe of virtue and to the intereſt of mankind, can ever be an enemy to Chriſtianity, if he truly underſtands it, and ſeriouſly reflects on its wiſe and uſeful tendency. It conducteth us to our journey's end by the plaineſt and ſecureſt path; where the *ſteps are not ſtreightened, and where he that runneth ſtumbleth not*. Let us who live under this laſt, and moſt gracious diſpenſation of God to mankind, *count all things but loſs for the excellency of the knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus our Lord*; and not ſuffer ourſelves, by the ſlight cavils of unbelievers, to be *moved away from the hope of the Goſpel*. Let us demonſtrate that we believe the ſuperior excellency of the chriſtian diſpenſation, by conforming to its precepts. Let us ſhew that we are chriſtians indeed and in truth, not by endleſs diſputes about trifles, and the tranſports of a blind zeal, but by practiſing that univerſal, that exalted goodneſs our holy religion recommends, and by abounding in thoſe *fruits of righteouſneſs which are through Chriſt to the praiſe and glory of God*.

From what has been ſaid we may clearly perceive how groundleſs all thoſe prejudices are which ſome conceive againſt religion, as if it was a peeviſh, moroſe ſcheme, burdenſome to human nature, and inconſiſtent with the true enjoyment of life. Such ſentiments are too apt to prevail in the heat of youth, when the ſpirits are briſk and lively, and the paſſions warm and impetuous: but it is wholly a miſtake, and a miſtake of the moſt dangerous tendency. The truth is, there is no pleaſure like that of a good conſcience; no real peace but what reſults from the practice of virtue. This enobles the mind, and can alone ſupport it under all the various and unequal ſcenes of the preſent ſtate of trial. This lays a ſure foundation of an eaſy, comfortable life, of a ſerene, peaceful death, and of eternal joy and happineſs hereafter: whereas vice is ruinous to all our moſt valuable intereſts. This ſpoils the native beauty, and ſubverts the order of the ſoul. This renders us the ſcorn of man, the rejected of God, and, without timely repentance, will rob us of a happy eternity. Religion is the health, the liberty, and the happineſs of the ſoul; ſin is the diſeaſe, the ſervitude, and deſtruction of it.

If this be not ſufficient to convince you, let me lead you into the chamber of an habitual rioter, the lewd debauchee, worn out in the cauſe of iniquity, *his bones full of the ſins of his youth*, that from his own mouth, as he lies on his expiring bed, you may learn that *the way of tranſgreſſion is hard*; and that however ſweet ſin may be in the commiſſion, *it ſtings like a ſerpent, and bites like an adder*.

I am going, reader, to repreſent to thee the laſt moments of a perſon of high birth and ſpirit; of great parts and

and ſtrong paſſions; every way accompliſhed, nor the leaſt in iniquity. His unkind treatment was the death of a moſt amiable wife; and his monſtrous extravagance, in effect, diſinherited his only child. And ſurely the death-bed of a profligate is next in horror to that abyſs to which it leads. It has the moſt of hell that is viſible upon earth; and he that has ſeen it has more than faith to confirm him in his creed. I ſee it now, ſays the worthy divine from whom I ſhall borrow this relation: for who can forget it? Are there in it no flames and furies?—You are ignorant then of what a ſcared imagination can figure; what a guilty heart can feel! How diſmal is it! The two great enemies of ſoul and body, ſickneſs and ſin, ſink and confound his friends; ſilence and darkneſs the ſhocking ſcene. Sickneſs excludes the light of heaven, and ſin its bleſſed hope. Oh, double darkneſs! more than Egyptian! acutely to be felt!

The ſad evening before the death of that noble youth, whoſe laſt hours ſuggeſted theſe thoughts, I was with him. No one was there but his phyſician, and an intimate acquaintance whom he loved, and whom he had ruined. At my coming he ſaid,

"You and the phyſician are come "too late.—I have neither life nor "hope. You both aim at miracles. "You would raiſe the dead."

Heaven, I ſaid, was merciful,

"Or I could not have been thus "guilty. What has it not done to "bleſs, and to ſave me?—I have "been too ſtrong for Omnipotence: "I plucked down ruin."

I ſaid, the bleſſed Redeemer—

"Hold! Hold! you wound me!-- "That is the rock on which I have "ſplit!----I denied his name."

Refuſing to hear any thing from me, or take any thing from the phyſician, he lay ſilent, as far as ſudden darts of pain would permit, till the clock ſtruck. Then he cried out with vehemence,

"Oh time! time! It is fit thou "ſhouldſt thus ſtrike thy murderer "to the heart.—How art thou fled "for ever?--A month! ----Oh, "for a ſingle week! I aſk not for "years, tho' an age were too little "for the much I have to do."

On my ſaying we could not do too much; that heaven was a bleſſed place-----

"So much the worſe. 'Tis loſt! "'Tis loſt!—Heaven is to me the "ſevereſt part of hell!"

Soon after I propoſed prayer.

"Pray you that can: I never "prayed. I cannot pray.—Nor need "I. Heaven is on my ſide already. "It cloſes with my conſcience. Its "ſevereſt ſtrokes but ſecond my "own."

His friend being much touched, even to tears at this, (for who could forbear? I could not) with a moſt affectionate look, ſaid,

" Keep theſe tears for thyſelf. I " have undone thee.——Doſt thou " weep for me? That's cruel. " What can pain me more?"

Here his friend, too much affected, would have left him.

" No, ſtay. Thou ſtill may'ſt " hope;—therefore hear me. How " madly have I talked?—how mad- " ly haſt thou liſtened and believed? " But look on my preſent ſtate as a " full anſwer to thee and to myſelf. " This body is all weakneſs and pain; " but my ſoul, as if ſtung up by tor- " ment, to greater ſtrength and ſpi- " rit, is full powerful to reaſon; full " mighty to ſuffer. And that which " thus triumphs within the jaws of " mortality, is doubtleſs immortal. " And as for a Deity, nothing leſs " than an Almighty could inflict the " pains I feel."

I was about to congratulate this paſſive, involuntary confeſſion, in his aſſerting the two prime articles of his creed, extorted by the rack of nature: when he thus very paſſionately added,

" No, no! let me ſpeak on. I " have not long to ſpeak.——My " much injured friend! my ſoul, " as my body, lies in ruins; in " ſcattered fragments of broken " thought: remorſe for the paſt " throws my thoughts on the fu- " ture. Worſe dread of the future " ſtrikes it back on the paſt. I " turn, and turn, and find no ray. " —Didſt thou feel half the moun- " tain that is on me, thou wouldſt " ſtruggle with the Martyr for his " ſtake, and bleſs heaven for the " flames;—that is not an everlaſt- " ing flame; that is not an un- " quenchable fire."

How were we ſtruck? yet, ſoon after, ſtill more. With what an eye of diſtraction; what a face of deſpair he cried out,

" My principles have poiſoned my " friend; my extravagance has beg- " gared my boy; my unkindneſs " has murdered my wife!—And is " there another hell?—Oh! thou " blaſphemed, yet moſt indulgent " Lord God! Hell itſelf is a refuge, " if it hides me from thy frown."

Soon after his underſtanding failed; his terrified imagination uttered horrors not to be repeated, or ever forgotten; and before the ſun (which I hope has ſeen few like him) aroſe, this gay, young, noble, ingenious, accompliſhed, and moſt wretched mortal expired.

It muſt indeed be owned, it ſometimes happens, that men who have led very wicked lives have gone out of the world, as they have lived in it, defying conſcience, and deriding a future judgment as an idle fiction: but theſe inſtances are very rare, and only prove that there are monſters in the moral as well as in the natural world.

It will perhaps be ſaid, that the ſons of vice and riot have pleaſure in ſenſual indulgences. Allowed: but it is altogether of the lower kind, empty fleeting and tranſient: *like the crackling*

crackling of thorns under a pot, ſo is the mirth of the wicked. It makes a noiſe and a blaze for the preſent; but ſoon vaniſhes away into ſmoke and vapour. On the other hand, the pleaſure of religion is ſolid and laſting; and will attend us through all, even the laſt ſtages of life. When we have paſſed the levity of youth, and have loſt our reliſh for the gay entertainments of ſenſe; when old age ſteals upon us, and ſtoops us towards the grave, this will cleave faſt to us, and give us relieve. It will be ſo far from terminating at death, that it then commences perfect, and continually improves with new additions.

Clad in this immortal robe, we need not fear the awful ſummons of the king of terrors, nor regret our retiring into the chambers of the duſt. Our immortal part will wing its way to the arms of its Omnipotent Redeemer, and find reſt in the heavenly manſions of the Almighty. And tho' our earthly part, this tabernacle of clay, return to its original duſt, it is only to be raiſed in a more beautiful and heavenly form. If it retires into the ſhadow of death, and viſit the gloomy habitations of the grave, it is only to return from a ſhort confinement to endleſs liberty. For our great Maſter will lead his redeemed from the chambers of the grave, and guide them in his ſtrength to his holy habitation. He will plant them in the mountain of his inheritance, in the place he hath prepared for them, even the ſanctuary which his hands hath eſtabliſhed; and we ſhall be with the Lord for ever and ever.

THE

THE LIVES OF THE APOSTLES.

Saint PETER.

CHAP. I.

The birth of St. Peter, and the tranſactions of his life before he became a diſciple of the bleſſed Jeſus.

ST. Peter was born at Bethſaida, a city of Galilee, ſituate on the banks of the lake of Gennaſereth, called alſo the ſea of Galilee, from its being ſituated in that country; and the lake of Tiberias from that city being built on its banks. But the particular time of this great apoſtle's birth cannot be known; the Evangeliſts and other writers among the primitive chriſtians having been ſilent with regard to this particular. It is however pretty certain, that he was at leaſt ten years older than his maſter; the circumſtances of his being married, and in a ſettled courſe of life, when he firſt became a follower of the great Meſſiah, and that authority and reſpect the gravity of his perſon procured him among the reſt of the apoſtles, ſufficiently declare this conjecture to be very near the truth.

As he was a deſcendant of Abraham, he was circumciſed according to the rites of the Moſaic law, and called by his parents Simon or Symeon, a name common at that time among the Jews. But after his becoming a diſciple of the bleſſed Jeſus, the additional title of Cephas was conferred upon him by his maſter, to denote the firmneſs of his faith; the word Cephas in the Syriac, the common language of the Jews at that time, ſignifying a Stone or Rock; and thence he is called in Greek *Petros*, and by us Peter, which implies the ſame thing.

With


Engraved for the Life of our Saviour.
St. Peter the Apostle.

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With regard to the parents of St. Peter, the Evangeliſts have alſo been ſilent, except in telling us that his father's name was Jonah, probably a fiſherman of Bethſaida. But what ever his trade, he was highly honoured by our bleſſed Saviour, who choſe two of his ſons, Andrew and Peter, to be his apoſtles, and preachers of the glad tidings of ſalvation to the children of men.

St. Peter, in his youth, was brought up to the trade of fiſhing on the lake of Bethſaida, famous for different kinds of fiſh, which excelled all others in the fineneſs of the taſte.

Here St. Peter cloſely followed his trade of fiſhing: but afterwards removed to Capernaum, probably on his being married, where he ſettled; for we find he had a houſe there when our Saviour began his publick miniſtry, and there he paid tribute. Nicephorus tells us that Helen, the mother of Conſtantine, erected a beautiful church over the ruins of St. Peter's houſe, in honour of that apoſtle.

Capernaum was as well ſituated as Bethſaida, for the carrying on of his trade, ſtanding at the influx of the Jordan into the ſea of Galilee, and where he might, with equal advantage, reap the fruits of an honeſt and induſtrious diligence. The buſineſs of St. Peter was, I confeſs, both mean and ſervile; it expoſed him to all the injuries of the weather, the tempeſtuouſneſs of the ſea, and the darkneſs and horror of the night, and all to acquire a mean livelihood for himſelf and his family. But meanneſs is no exception to the Almighty, the poor, if virtuous, are as dear to heaven as the wealthy, the great, and the powerful: the beggar and the monarch are equally regarded by the great parent of the human race, with whom there is no reſpect of perſons.

And here I cannot help obſerving the wiſe and admirable methods made uſe of by Divine Providence, in making choice of ſuch mean and unlikely inſtruments in planting and propagating the Chriſtian religion in the world. Men who were deſtitute of every advantage of education, and brought up to the meaneſt employments, were choſen to confound the wiſe, and overturn the learning of the prudent. Such were the perſons whom the Almighty ſent to propagate the religion of his ſon; to ſilence the wiſe, the ſcribe, and the diſputer of this world, and to make fooliſh the wiſdom of the earth. For though the Jews required a ſign, and the Greeks ſought after wiſdom; though the preaching of a crucified Saviour was a ſcandal to the former, and fooliſhneſs to the learned latter; yet by this fooliſhneſs of preaching, God was pleaſed to ſave them that believed: and in the event made it appear, that *the fooliſhneſs of God is wiſer than man, and the weakneſs of God is ſtronger than men.* That ſo the honour of all may redound to himſelf, *that no fleſh ſhould glory in his preſence; but that he that glorieth, ſhould glory in the Lord.*

CHAP. II.

The tranſactions of St. Peter from his firſt coming to the great Meſſiah, till his being called to be a diſciple.

THE Evangeliſts have not told us of what ſect St. Peter was before he became a follower of the bleſſed Jeſus. But it is highly probable that he was a diſciple of John the Baptiſt. We know that his brother Andrew was a follower of that preacher of repentance; and it is very unlikely that he, who was ſo ready to carry his brother the early tidings of the Meſſiah, that the *ſun of righteouſneſs* was already riſen in thoſe parts, ſhould not be equally ſollicitous to bring him under the diſcipline and influences of John the Baptiſt, the day-ſtar which appeared to uſher in the appearance of the Son of God. Beſides, Peter's great readineſs and curioſity at the firſt news of Chriſt's appearing, to come to him and converſe with him, ſhews that his expectations had been awakened, and ſome glimmerring rays of hope conveyed to him by the preaching and miniſtry of John, who was *the voice of one crying in the wilderneſs, prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths ſtrait.*

But however this be, whether Peter was or was not a diſciple of John the Baptiſt, he became acquainted with the immaculate lamb of God in the following manner: The bleſſed Jeſus, having ſpent thirty years in the ſolitudes of a private life, had lately been baptized by John in Jordan, and there owned by the ſolemn atteſtation of heaven to be the Son of God; whereupon he was immediately hurried into the Wilderneſs, and there for forty days maintained a perſonal conteſt with the devil. But having conquered this great enemy of mankind, he returned to *Bethabara beyond Jordan*, where John was baptizing his proſelytes, and endeavouring to anſwer the Jews who had ſent a deputation to him to enquire concerning this new Meſſiah that appeared among them. To ſatisfy theſe curious enquirers of Iſrael, John faithfully related every thing he knew concerning him, gave him the greateſt character, and ſoon after pointed him out to his diſciples; upon which two of them preſently followed the great Redeemer of mankind, one of which was Andrew Simon's brother. They came to him towards evening, and in all probability ſtayed with him the whole night, during which time Andrew had an opportunity of informing himſelf, and of ſatisfying his moſt ſcrupulous enquiries.

Nor did he conceal the joyful diſcovery he had made; for early in the morning he haſtened to acquaint his brother Simon that he had found the Meſſiah. It is not enough to be happy alone; religion is a communicative principle, that like the circles in the water, delights to multiply itſelf, and to diffuſe its influences all around, eſpecially on thoſe whom nature has placed neareſt to us. I have, ſaid he, with rapture to his brother, found that eminent perſon ſo long and ſignally foretold by the prophets,

prophets, and whom all the devout and pious among the ſons of Jacob ſo earneſtly expected.

Simon, who was one of thoſe who waited for redemption in Iſrael, raviſhed with this joyful news, and impatient of delay, preſently followed his brother to the place: and on his arrival our bleſſed Saviour immediately gave him a proof of his divinity; ſaluting him at firſt ſight by his name, and telling him both who he was, his name and kindred, and what title ſhould ſoon be conferred upon him.

But whether theſe two ſons of Jonah conſtantly attended in perſon from that time on the great Redeemer of mankind, and became his diſciples, the ſacred hiſtory is ſilent. It is however probable, that they ſtayed with him ſome time, till they were inſtructed in the firſt rudiments of his doctrine; and then by the leave of their great and benevolent Maſter returned to their families and to their callings; for it is reaſonable to ſuppoſe that the bleſſed Jeſus was not at this time willing to awaken the jealouſy of the rulers of Iſrael, and the ſuſpicion of the Romans, by a numerous retinue, and therefore diſmiſſed his diſciples, and among the reſt Andrew and Peter, who returned to their trade of fiſhing on the lake, and where our bleſſed Redeemer afterwards found them.

The holy Jeſus had now more than a year entered on his publick miniſtry, going into every part of the country, to ſeek opportunities of doing good to the children of men; ſo that by the conſtancy of his preaching, and the reputation of his miracles, his fame was ſpread throughout all Judea; and multitudes of people flocked to him from all parts to hear his doctrine, and be ſpectators of his mighty works. And ſurely it is no wonder that the parched and barren earth thirſted for the kindly dews and ſhowers of heaven.

But to avoid this prodigious throng of people, our great Redeemer often retired to ſome ſolitary place, to indulge the privacies of contemplation. In one of theſe retreats on the banks of the ſea of Galilee, the multitude found him out, and ran to him from the city. Our Saviour therefore, to avoid the crowd, ſtepped into a fiſhing-boat, which lay near the ſhore, and belonged to Simon Peter, who, together with his companions were on ſhore drying their nets after an unſucceſsful night ſpent in toil and labour. The bleſſed Jeſus, who might have commanded, was pleaſed to intreat Peter, who now returned to his boat, to thruſt off a little from the land, that he might inſtruct the people, who were gathered in prodigious crowds on the borders of the lake.

Peter gladly complied with the requeſt of his maſter, who delivered his heavenly doctrine to the people on the ſhore. As ſoon as he had ended his diſcourſe, he reſolved to ſeal his miracle, that the people might be perſuaded he was a *teacher come from God*. Accordingly he ordered Simon to row farther from the ſhore, and caſt his net into the ſea. To which Simon anſwered,

that they had laboured the whole preceding night and had taken nothing; and if they could not then ucceed, there was little hopes of it now, as the day was far leſs proper for fiſhing than the night. But as his Maſter was pleaſed to command, he would readily obey: and accordingly he let down his net, when to the aſtoniſhment both of him and his companions, ſo great a multitude of fiſhes were incloſed, that they were obliged to call their partners to their aſſiſtance. Amazed at this miraculous draught of fiſhes, Simon Peter, in an ecſtaſy of admiration, blended with awe and humility, fell proſtrate at his Maſter's feet, acknowledging himſelf a vile and ſinful perſon, and thinking himſelf unworthy of being admitted into the preſence of a perſon ſo immediately ſent from God. But the compaſſionate Son of the Moſt High, kindly removed his fears; telling him that this miracle was wrought to confirm his faith, and indicate to him that the Almighty had appointed a more noble employment for him, that of ſaving the ſouls of the children of men. From this time Peter and his companions became the inſeparable and conſtant diſciples of the great Meſſiah, living under the rules of his diſcipline and inſtitutions.

Soon after our bleſſed Saviour returned to Capernaum with his diſciples, where they found the mother-in-law of Peter dangerouſly ill of a fever. But the compaſſionate Jeſus, who never omitted an opportunity of doing good to the human race, rebuked the diſeaſe, and taking her by the hand, reſtored her in a moment to her former health; demonſtrating at once his power and willingneſs to relieve the ſons and daughters of affliction.

CHAP. III.

The tranſactions of St. Peter from his being elected one of the twelve apoſtles, till the laſt paſſover of our bleſſed Saviour.

OUR great Redeemer, having for ſome time entered on his publick miniſtry, thought proper to elect ſome peculiar perſons from among his followers, to be conſtant witneſs of his miracles and doctrines, and who, after his departure, might be intruſted with the care of building his church, and planting that religion in the world for which he himſelf left the manſions of heaven, and put on the veil of mortality. In order to this, he withdrew privately in the evening to a ſolitary mountain, where he ſpent the night in ſolemn addreſſes to his Almighty father, for rendering the great work he was going to undertake proſperous and ſucceſsful.

Early the next morning, the diſciples came to him, out of whom he made choice of twelve to be his apoſtles, and the conſtant attendants on his perſon. Theſe he afterwards inveſted with the power of working miracles, and ſent them into different parts of Judea, in order to carry on with more rapidity the great work which he himſelf had ſo happily begun.

All the Evangeliſts in their enumeration of theſe apoſtles, conſtantly place St. Peter firſt. Indeed the age and gravity of his perſon, together with his being firſt called to be an apoſtle, particularly qualified him for being preſident of this ſacred college. But we muſt not ſuppoſe that St. Peter was inveſted with any perſonal prerogative above his brethren; none of them ever intimated any ſuch thing, and St. Paul ſays expreſsly, that he himſelf was not inferior to the very chiefeſt apoſtle.

Soon after this election, the bleſſed Jeſus, attended by Peter and the two ſons of Zebedee, followed Jairus, a ruler of the ſynagogue to his houſe, in order to reſtore his daughter, an only child, who lay at the point of death; but before their arrival, a meſſenger arrived with the news that the damſel was dead, and therefore unneceſſary for our Saviour to give himſelf any farther trouble. But our bleſſed Saviour bid the ruler not deſpair; for if he believed his daughter ſhould yet be reſtored to her former health. And accordingly on his arrival he took the maid by the hand, and with the power of a word recalled her fleeting ſpirit, which had quitted its earthly tabernacle, and reſtored her again to life and health.

We have no farther account of St. Peter in particular, till the night after our Saviour's miraculouſly feeding the multitude in the Wilderneſs. Jeſus had ordered his diſciples to take ſhip and paſs over to the other ſide, while he ſent the multitude away. But a violent ſtorm ariſing, they were in great danger of their lives, when their great Maſter came unto them walking on the ſurface of the boiſterous billows, with the ſame eaſe as if it had been dry ground. At his approach the diſciples were greatly terrified, ſuppoſing they had ſeen a ſpirit. But their compaſſionate Maſter ſoon diſpelled their fears, by telling them it was he himſelf; and therefore they had no reaſon to be terrified. Peter, who was always remarkable for bold reſolutions, deſired his maſter to give him leave to come to him on the water; and on obtaining permiſſion, he left the ſhip, and walked on the ſea to meet his Saviour. But when he heard the deep roar around him, and the waves increaſe, he began to be afraid; and as his faith declined, his body ſunk in the water; ſo that, in the greateſt agony he called for aſſiſtance to him who was able to ſave. Nor was his cry in vain; the compaſſionate Redeemer of mankind ſtretched out his hind, and again placed him on the ſurface of the water, with this gentle reproof, *O thou of little faith, wherefore didſt thou doubt?* And no ſooner was the bleſſed Jeſus and his diſciple entered into the ſhip, than the winds ceaſed, the waves ſubſided, and the ſhip was at the land whither they were going. A miracle of this kind could not fail of aſtoniſhing the diſciples, and convincing them of the divinity of his perſon; accordingly they drew near, and worſhipped him with this confeſſion, *Of a truth thou art the Son of God.*

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The next day our bleſſed Saviour entered the ſynagogue of Capernaum; and, from the miracle of the loaves, took occaſion to diſcourſe concerning himſelf, as the true manna, and the *bread which came down from heaven*; opening to them the more ſublime and ſpiritual myſteries, and the neceſſary and important duties of the Goſpel. On which great part of the audience, who expected he was going to erect a temporal kingdom, and re eſtabliſh the throne of David in Jeruſalem, offended at his repreſenting his dominion as entirely ſpiritual, departed from him, and came no more to hear his diſcourſes. Jeſus, on beholding this defection, turned himſelf towards his diſciples, and asked them whether they alſo *would go away?* To which Peter replied, *Lord, whither ſhall we go? thou haſt the words of eternal life.* Thy doctrine alone can inſtruct us in the paths that lead to happineſs; and thou art the true Meſſiah, the great prophet, ſo fully foretold, and ſo long expected.

The inhabitants of Judea, who beheld with aſtoniſhment the miracles wrought by the bleſſed Jeſus, had formed many conjectures concerning him. Our great Redeemer was not ignorant of this; but being willing to hear what account his diſciples would give him of the various opinions of the people, asked them, what the world ſaid concerning them? To which they replied, that ſome took him for John the Baptiſt riſen from the dead; ſome thought him to be Elias, and others Jeremiah, or one of the old prophets. This account not ſatisfying our bleſſed Saviour, he told them that it was no wonder that the people, who had ſeldom ſeen him, ſhould form various conjectures concerning him and the doctrines he preached; but as they had been conſtantly with him, heard his ſermons, and been ſpectators of his miracles, it was natural to think they might form a truer idea of him; and therefore, asked them what they themſelves thought of him? To which Peter, in the name of the reſt, anſwered, *Thou art Chriſt, the Son of the living God*, anointed and ſet apart by the moſt High to be the great king, prieſt, and prophet of Iſrael. This full and comprehenſive declaration of Peter ſatisfied the enquiry of our bleſſed Saviour, who anſwered, *Bleſſed art thou Simon Bar-Jonah; for fleſh and blood hath not not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.* That is, this faith which thou haſt now confeſſed is not human, or built upon the teſtimony of man, but upon thoſe notions and principles which I was ſent from God to reveal unto the world, and thoſe great and ſolemn atteſtations he hath given from heaven to the truth both of my perſon and doctrine. Therefore, I *ſay alſo unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell ſhall not prevail againſt it.* As thy name ſignifies a rock, ſo ſhalt thou prove, firm, ſolid, and immoveable in building my church, which ſhall be ſo firmly eſtabliſhed by thy care and diligence upon that faith thou haſt now profeſſed, that all the aſſaults of men

and devils ſhall not be able to deſtroy it.

The diſciples had no idea that their Maſter was to ſuffer death for the ſins of the world; on the contrary, they conſidered him as immortal, having imbibed the opinion of the Scribes and Phariſees, *that Chriſt abideth for ever*: ſo that when the bleſſed Jeſus told them of the ſufferings he muſt undergo at Jeruſalem, what affronts and indignities he muſt ſuffer, and be at laſt put to death with all the acts of torture and diſgrace by a ſentence of the Jewiſh Sannedrim, Peter, who could not endure the thought of his Maſter's ſuffering even the leaſt puniſhment, much leſs thoſe cruelties he had mentioned and at laſt death itſelf, interrupted him very unſeaſonably, and ſaid, *Be it far from thee Lord, this ſhall not be unto thee.* He conſidered theſe ſufferings as inconſiſtent with the character of the great Meſſiah, whom he expected would reſtore the ſplendor of the throne of David his father, and reduce all the kingdoms of the earth to his obedience. But our bleſſed Saviour, who came down from heaven to give his life a ranſom for the ſins of the world, and who valued the redemption of mankind infinitely more than his own eaſe and ſafety, highly reſented this ſpeech of St. Peter, and accordingly returned this ſharp reproof, *Get thee behind me, Satan, thou art an offence to me.* Thy pernicious counſel in ſeeking to oppoſe the deſign for which I purpoſely left the courts of heaven are offenſive; and thou *ſavoureſt not the things of God, but thoſe that be of men.*

Some time after the great Redeemer of the ſons of men, being to receive a ſpecimen of his future glorification, took with him his three moſt intimate of his apoſtles, Peter and the two ſons of Zebedee, and went up into a very high mountain; and while they were employed in earneſt addreſſes to the Almighty, he was tranſfigured before them, darting ſuch luſtre from his face, as exceeded the meridian rays of the ſun in brightneſs; and ſuch beams of light iſſued from his garments, as exceeded the light of the cleareſt day; an evident and ſenſible repreſentation of that ſtate, when *the juſt ſhall walk in white robes*, and *ſhine as the ſun in the kingdom of their father.* During this heavenly ſcene, the great prophets Moſes and Elias appeared in all the brightneſs and majeſty of a glorified ſtate, familiarly converſing with him, and diſcourſing of the death and ſufferings he was ſhortly to undergo, and his aſcenſion to the heavenly regions of bliſs and happineſs.

In the mean time Peter and the two apoſtles were fallen aſleep, being either very heavy for want of natural reſt, or overpowered with theſe extraordinary appearances, which the frailty and weakneſs of their nature could not ſupport, were fallen into a trance. But on their awaking were ſtrangely ſurpriſed to ſee their Lord ſurrounded with ſo much glory, and thoſe two great perſons converſing with him. They how-

however remained ſilent till thoſe viſitants from the courts of heaven were going to depart, when Peter, in a rapture and ecſtaſy of mind, addreſſed himſelf to his maſter, declaring their infinite pleaſure and delight in being favoured with this glorious ſpectacle; and deſired his leave to erect three tabernacles, one for him, and one for Moſes, and one for Elias. But while he was ſpeaking a bright cloud ſuddenly overſhadowed thoſe two great prophets, and a voice came from it, uttering theſe remarkable words, *This is my beloved ſon, in whom I am well pleaſed, hear ye him.* On which the apoſtles were ſeized with the utmoſt conſternation, and fell upon their faces to the ground; but Jeſus touching them, bid them diſmiſs their fears and look up with confidence. They immediately obeyed, but ſaw their maſter only; the others having vaniſhed together with ther with the cloud of light.

After this heavenly ſcene, our bleſſed Saviour travelled through Galilee with his apoſtles, and at his return to Capernaum, the tax-gatherers came to Peter, and asked him, whether his Maſter was not obliged to pay the tribute. To which Peter readily declared he did. On his entering the houſe to give his maſter an account of this demand, Jeſus prevented him, by asking *What thinkeſt thou Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take cuſtom or tribute? of their own children or of ſtrangers?* To which Peter anſwered not from their ſervants and family, but from ſtrangers. *Then,* replied our Lord, *are the children free.* I myſelf as being the Son of God, and you as my ſervants are free from this tax yearly paid to God, for repairing his temple at Jeruſalem. But rather than give offence, by ſeeming to deſpiſe the houſe of God, and unvalue that authority which had ſettled this tribute, he determined to pay it, tho' at the expence of a miracle. Accordingly, he ordered Peter to repair to the ſea with a hook, and take the firſt fiſh that offered, in whoſe mouth he ſhould find a piece of money. The diſciples obeyed, and found the money as his maſter had foretold, and gave it to the gatherers of the tribute for his maſter and himſelf.

Our bleſſed Saviour was now going for the laſt time to Jeruſalem; and that all the ſcriptures concerning him might be fulfilled, he ordered two of his diſciples, probably Peter and John, to fetch him an aſs that he might enter the city on it as the prophet had foretold, *Tell ye the daughter of Sion, behold thy king cometh unto thee, meek and ſitting upon an aſs, and a colt the ſole of an aſs.* The diſciples obeyed their maſter, and brought the aſs to Jeſus, who being mounted thereon, he entered the city amidſt the hoſannahs of a numerous multitude with palm-branches in their hands, ſome ſpreading their garments in the way, and others ſtrewing it with branches of trees, proclaiming at once both the majeſty of a prince, and the triumph of a Saviour.

CHAP. IV.

The tranſactions of St. Peter from the laſt paſſover to the death of our bleſſed Saviour.

THE great Redeemer of mankind having thus entered the city of Jeruſalem in triumph, repaired to Bethany; from whence he ſent two of his diſciples, Peter and John, to make preparations for his celebrating the paſſover.

Every thing being ready, our bleſſed Saviour and his apoſtles entered the houſe, and ſat down to table. But their great Maſter, who often taught them by example as well as precept, aroſe from his ſeat, laid aſide his upper garment, took the towel, and pouring water into a baſon, began to waſh his diſciples feet, to teach them humility and charity by his own example. But on his coming to Peter, he would by no means admit his Maſter to perform ſo mean and condeſcending an office. What! the Son of God ſtoop to waſh the feet of a ſinful mortal! A thought which ſhocked the apoſtle, who ſtrenuouſly declared, *Thou ſhalt never waſh my feet.* But the bleſſed Jeſus told him, that if he waſhed him not, he could have no part with him; inſinuating that this action was myſtical, and ſignified the remiſſion of ſins, and the purifying virtue of the ſpirit of the moſt High, to be poured upon all true chriſtians. This anſwer ſufficiently removed the ſcruples of Peter, who cried out, *Lord, not my feet only but alſo my hands and my head.* Waſh me in every part, rather than let me loſe my portion in thee.

The bleſſed Jeſus, having ſet them this pattern of humility, began to reflect on his approaching ſufferings, and on the perſon who ſhould betray him into the hands of wicked and cruel men, telling them that not a ſtranger or an enemy, but one of his friends, one of his apoſtles, and even one of them who then ſat at table with him would betray him. This declaration exceedingly affected them all in general, and Peter in particular, who made ſigns to St. John, then lying on the boſom of his beloved Maſter, to ask him particularly who it was? Jeſus complied with this requeſt, and gave them to underſtand that it was Judas Iſcariot.

Our great Redeemer now began the inſtitution of his ſupper, that great and ſolemn inſtitution, which he reſolved to leave behind him, to be conſtantly celebrated in his church, as a ſtanding monument of his love in dying for mankind; telling them at the ſame time, that he himſelf was now going to leave them, and that *whither he went they could not come.* Peter, not well underſtanding what he meant, asked him whither he was going? To which our great Redeemer replied, that he was going to that place, whither he could not now, but ſhould hereafter follow him: intimating the martyrdom he was to ſuffer for his maſter's religion. Peter anſwered, that he was ready now to follow him, even if it required him to lay down his life. This confident preſumption was not at all

agreeable to the bleſſed Jeſus, who told him he had promiſed great things, but would be ſo far from performing them, that before *the cock crew twice*, that is, before three in the morning, he would thrice deny his Maſter.

Supper being now ended they ſung an hymn, and departed to the Mount of Olives: where Jeſus again put them in mind how greatly the things he was going to ſuffer would offend them. To which Peter replied, that *though all men ſhould be offended becauſe of him, yet he himſelf would never be offended.* How far will an indiſcreet zeal and affection tranſport even a good man into vanity and preſumption! Peter queſtions the fidelity of others, but never doubts his own; though his Lord had juſt before reproved him for his ſelf-ſufficiency. This confidence of Peter inſpired the reſt of the apoſtles with courage; ſo that they declared their conſtant and unſhaken adherence to their maſter. But our bleſſed Saviour, who well knew the frailty of human nature, anſwered Peter in the ſame manner he had done before, when he was celebrating his laſt ſupper.

They now repaired to the garden of Gethſemane; and leaving the reſt of the apoſtles near the entrance, our bleſſed Saviour taking with him Peter, James, and John, retired into the more ſolitary parts of the garden, to enter on the preparatory ſcene of the great tragedy that was now approaching.

Here the bleſſed Jeſus laboured under the bittereſt agony that ever human nature ſuffered, during which he prayed with the utmoſt fervency to his Almighty Father, *offering up prayers and ſupplications, with ſtrong cryings and tears; and his ſweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.* While our great Redeemer was thus interceeding with the Almighty, his three diſciples were fallen aſleep, though he had made three ſeveral viſits to them, and calling to Peter, asked him, if he could not watch one hour with him? adviſing them all to watch and pray, that they might not enter into temptation, adding, *The ſpirit indeed is willing, but the fleſh is weak.*

What incomparable ſweetneſs! What generous candour did the great Redeemer of the world diſplay on this occaſion! He paſſed the moſt charitable cenſure upon an action, which malice and ill-nature would have painted in colours as black as the ſhades of darkneſs. How reaſonable was the requeſt made by their great Maſter! He only deſired them to watch with him during his bitter agony; and this but for a ſmall time, a ſingle hour; it would ſoon be over, and then they might freely conſult their own eaſe and ſafety. It was their dear Lord and Maſter that made this requeſt, who was going to lay down his life for them, was now ſweating under the prelude of his ſufferings, and expecting every moment the whole powers of darkneſs to fall upon him. But all theſe conſiderations were drowned in a profound ſecurity, the diſciples were buried in a deep ſleep, and though

though often awaked and informed of the approaching tragedy, they little regarded the admonitions, as if nothing but eaſe and ſoftneſs engaged their thoughts: an action which ſeemed to imply the moſt amazing ingratitude, and the higheſt diſregard for their Lord and Maſter. But he who was compaſſion itſelf would not impute it to their want of affection, or a diſregard for his ſafety: he conſidered it merely as the effect of their infirmities, and made an excuſe for them when they could make none for themſelves; teaching us the uſeful leſſon of putting the moſt favourable conſtruction on the actions of others; and to imitate the bee and not the ſpider, by ſucking honey, inſtead of poiſon, from the various tranſactions of human life.

While he was diſcourſing with them, a band of ſoldiers from the chief prieſts and elders, preceded by the traitor Judas to conduct and direct them, ruſhed into the garden, and ſeized the great high-prieſt of our profeſſion. Peter, whoſe ungovernable zeal would admit of no reſtraint, drew his ſword, and, without the leaſt order from his maſter, ſtruck at one of the perſons who ſeemed to be remarkably buſy in binding Jeſus, and cut off his right ear. This wild and unwarrantable zeal was very offenſive to his maſter, who rebuked Peter, and intreated the patience of the ſoldiers, while he miraculouſly healed the wound.

But now the fidelity of the Apoſtles which they had urged with ſo much confidence, was put to the trial. They ſaw their maſter in the hands of a rude and inconſiderate band of men; and therefore ſhould have exerted their power to releaſe him, or at leaſt have been the companions of his ſufferings, and endeavoured, by every kind and endearing action, to have leſſened his grief. But alas! inſtead of aſſiſting or comforting their maſter, they all forſook him and fled.

The ſoldiers who had bound Jeſus led him away, and delivered him to the chief prieſts and elders, who carried him from one tribunal to another; firſt to Annas and then to Caiphas, where the Jewiſh Sanhedrim were aſſembled, in order to try and condemn him.

In the mean time, Peter, who had followed the other diſciples in their flight, recovered his ſpirits, and, being encouraged by his companion St. John, returned to ſeek his maſter; and ſeeing him leading to the high-prieſt's hall, followed at a diſtance to know the event: but on his coming to the door was refuſed admittance, till one of the diſciples, probably St. John, who was acquainted there, came out, and prevailed upon the ſervant who kept the door to let him in. Peter, being admitted, repaired to the fire burning in the middle of the hall, round which the officers and ſervants were ſtanding; where being obſerved by the maid-ſervant who let him in, ſhe charged him with being one of Chriſt's diſciples; but Peter publickly denied the charge, declaring that he did not know him, and preſently withdrew into the porch, where he

heard the cock crow: an intimation ſeemingly ſufficient to have awakened his conſcience into a quick ſenſe of his duty, and the promiſe he had a few hours before made to his maſter. But alas! human nature, when left to itſelf, is remarkably frail and inconſtant. This Peter ſufficiently experienced; for while he continued in the porch, another maid met him, and charged him with being one of the followers of Jeſus of Nazareth: which Peter firmly denied, and, the better to gain belief, ratified it with an oath.

About an hour after this, the ſervant of the high-prieſt, he whoſe ear Peter had cut off, charged him with being a diſciple of Chriſt, and that he himſelf had ſeen him in the garden with him; adding that his very ſpeech ſufficiently proved that he was a Galilean. Peter however ſtill denied the fact; and to add the higheſt accompliſhment to his ſin, ratified it, not only by an oath, but a ſolemn curſe and execration, that *he was not the perſon*, that *he knew not the man*. But no ſooner had he uttered this denial, than the *cock crew*. At which his maſter turned about, and earneſtly looked upon him: a look that pierced him to the heart, and brought to his remembrance what his Saviour had more than once foretold, that he would baſely and ſhamefully deny him. Peter was now no longer able to contain his ſorrow; he flew from the palace of the high-prieſt, and *wept bitterly*, paſſionately bewailing his folly, and the aggravations of his ſin; endeavouring thereby to make ſome reparation for his fault, recover the favour of heaven, and prevent the execution of divine juſtice, by taking a ſevere revenge upon himſelf.

This fall of St. Peter ſhould convince us of the miſerable frailty even of the beſt of men, and effectually ſubdue thoſe vain confidences which are apt to riſe in our hearts from our own ſuppoſed ſtrength and virtue. For as this great diſciple fell in ſo ſcandalous a manner, who ſhall hereafter dare to depend upon the higheſt degree of knowledge, when one ſo wiſe, ſo perfectly ſatisfied of the truth of the chriſtian doctrine, was, after the fulleſt convictions of his own conſcience, ſo weak and frail as to deny and abjure his Lord who inſtructed and bought him, even at the price of his own blood? Who ſhall preſume upon his beſt reſolutions, when he who declared ſo firm a purpoſe of adhering to Jeſus, did within a few hours peremptorily and ſolemnly diſown that very perſon for whoſe ſake he was lately ready and diſpoſed to lay down his life? There is, indeed, no reaſon to doubt that St. Peter at that time ſpoke the very ſenſe of his ſoul; that he had an honeſt and ſincere heart, was ſtedfaſtly determined, and, as he thought, able to perform what, with ſo much piety and affection, he intended and profeſſed. But his misfortune was, that he did not conſider the infirmities of human nature, promiſing, in the warmth of his zeal, more than he was able to perform. He relied on his own integrity, thinking good reſolutions a ſufficient defence againſt the moſt violent temptations.

tations. But when the aſſault was made, and danger with her terrifying aſpect appeared, the event ſufficiently proved, that how willing ſoever the ſpirit might be, yet the fleſh was at beſt exceeding frail and weak. And if this great champion of the chriſtian cauſe ſo ſoon gave ground, how ſhall we be able to engage in the ſpiritual combat? Who of us would reſolve to die with Chriſt rather than deny him? and yet the moſt ſerious and ſincerely reſolved may fail in the time of trouble. We have in St. Peter a ſad experiment for our inſtruction. The opinion of his own ſtrength proved his ruin. So dangerous and fatal is it to lean on our own underſtanding; to be wiſe, good, and ſafe in our own conceits; when all our ſufficiency, all our ſafety is of God.

We ſhould alſo, from this example, remember the wiſdom and goodneſs of the Almighty, in cauſing the faults and infirmities of his ſaints to be recorded in the holy ſcriptures, and the uſe we ought to make of their failings and temptations. Their eminent virtues, and their as eminent repentance where they did amiſs, are written as a ſeaſonable warning, and exhibit an inſtance of humiliation to all future ages; by letting us ſee, that the moſt perfect are but men, ſubject to blemiſhes and imperfections; and that the higheſt and pureſt ſtate is no ſecurity from danger. This ſhould make us very tender how we judge and deſpiſe our brethren; whoſe faults, however ſeverely we may cenſure them, might probably have been our own, had we been in their circumſtances, and ſurrounded with their temptations. For *let him that thinketh he ſtandeth, take heed leſt he fall.* We ſhould not then promiſe ourſelves ſafety and freedom from temptations in any circumſtances of life; or ſo far preſume on our own virtues, as to think we are incapable of committing the blackeſt crimes, ſhould the Almighty withdraw his grace, and leave us to ourſelves. The example of ſuch worthies ſhould awaken our care, mortify our vanity, and remind us of our dependence upon an higher power, and to give him the acknowledgements due for all the good we do, and for not falling into evil.

And as their failings admoniſh, ſo they alſo ſhould comfort us, by demonſtrating that God does not ſuddenly caſt off his ſervants when they have heinouſly offended him: that we ought not to deſpair, tho' our tranſgreſſions are great and many; for if we will return and make amends for our paſt offences, we ſhall be kindly received, and freely pardoned. But St. Peter's fall will afford no juſt ground of comfort to any but ſuch as are careful to riſe again with him. As his ſin is a warning, ſo is his repentance. They who blame his ſin, ſhould remember his ſorrow; and if they abhor the one, let them ſtrive to imitate the other.

CHAP

CHAP. V.

The tranſactions of St. Peter from the reſurrection to the aſcenſion of our great Redeemer.

WHETHER St. Peter, after his denial of his Maſter, retired into ſome ſolitary place, to give vent to his grief and indulge his tears, or whether he followed his Saviour thro' the ſeveral ſtages of his trial, and perſonally attended as a mourner at the funeral of his maſter, we have no account. But however that be, he ſtayed at Jeruſalem, or at leaſt in the neighbourhood, and probably with St. John; for when Mary Magdalene returned from the ſepulchre, to inform the diſciples that the ſtone was rolled away from the door, and the body not to be found, Peter and John ſet out immediately towards the garden. John, who was the younger, arrived firſt at the ſepulchre, looked into it, but did not enter, either out of fear, or a reverence to his Saviour. Peter, whoſe zeal was greatly increaſed, came ſoon after, and reſolutely went into the ſepulchre, where he found the linen clothes lying together in one place, and the napkin that was about his head wrapped together in another: a ſufficient indication that the body was not ſtolen away; for had that been the caſe, ſo much care and order would not have been obſerved in diſpoſing of the linen clothes.

But Peter did not wait long in ſuſpence with regard to his great Lord and Maſter; for the ſame day, and probably about noon, Jeſus appeared to him; perhaps in compaſſion to his ſorrow, in which he was overwhelmed for his late ſhameful denial of his Maſter. And as he was the firſt of the diſciples who had made a ſignal confeſſion of the divinity of the Meſſiah, ſo it was reaſonable he ſhould firſt ſee him after his reſurrection: and at the ſame time to convince him that the crime he had been guilty of in denying him was pardoned, and that he was come, like the good Samaritan, to pour oil into his wounded conſcience.

Soon after the apoſtles prepared to obey the command of their great maſter, of retiring into Galilee; and we find that Peter, Nathanael, the two ſons of Zebedee, and two other diſciples, returned to their old trade of fiſhing on the lake. One morning early as they were labouring at their employment, having ſpent the whole night to no purpoſe, they ſaw on the ſhore a grave perſon, perhaps in the habit of a traveller, who called to them and aſked them if they had any meat; to which they anſwered, no. Caſt then, replied he, the net on the right ſide of the ſhip, and ye ſhall find. They followed his directions and incloſed a prodigious number of large fiſh. Aſtoniſhed at ſuch remarkable ſucceſs, the diſciples looked one upon another for ſome time, till St. John told Peter, that the perſon on the ſhore was doubtleſs their great Lord and Maſter, whom the winds, the ſea, and the inhabitants of the watery region were ſo ready to obey.

Peter

Peter no ſooner heard the beloved diſciple declare his opinion concerning the ſtranger, than his zeal took fire, and, notwithſtanding the coldneſs of the ſeaſon, girt on his fiſher's coat, threw himſelf into the ſea, and ſwam to ſhore; his impatience to be with his dear Lord and Maſter, not ſuffering him to ſtay the few minutes neceſſary to bring the ſhip to land.

As ſoon as the diſciples came on ſhore, they found a fire kindled, and fiſh laid upon it, either immediately created by the power of their divine Maſter, or which came aſhore of its own accord, and offered itſelf to his hand. But notwithſtanding there were fiſh already on the fire, he ordered them to bring of thoſe they had now caught, and dreſs them for their repaſt, he himſelf eating with them; both to give them an inſtance of mutual love and friendſhip, and alſo to aſſure them of the truth of his human nature, ſince he was riſen from the dead.

When the repaſt was ended, our bleſſed Saviour addreſſed himſelf particularly to Peter, urging him to the utmoſt diligence in his care of ſouls: and becauſe he knew that nothing but a ſincere love to himſelf could ſupport him under the troubles and dangers of ſo laborious and difficult an employment, he enquired of him whether he loved him more than the reſt of the Apoſtles; mildly reproving him for his over-confident reſolution. Peter, whom fatal experience hed taught humility, modeſtly anſwered, that none knew ſo well as himſelf the integrity of his affections. Thou knoweſt the hearts of all men, nothing is hid from thee, and therefore thou knoweſt that I love thee. The queſtion was three ſeveral times repeated by our bleſſed Saviour, and as often times anſwered by the apoſtle: it being but juſt that he, who by a threefold denial had given ſo much reaſon to queſtion his affection, ſhould now, by a threefold confeſſion, give more than common aſſurance of his ſincere love for his Maſter; and to each of theſe confeſſions our great Redeemer added this ſignal trial of his affection, *Feed my ſheep.* Inſtruct and teach them with the utmoſt care, and the utmoſt tenderneſs.

The bleſſed Jeſus having thus engaged Peter to a chearful compliance with the dangers that might attend the diſcharge of his office, particularly intimated to him the fate that would attend him: telling him, that when he was young, he girt himſelf, lived at his pleaſure, and went wherever his fancy directed him; but when he ſhould reach the term of old age, he ſhould ſtretch forth his hands, and another ſhould gird and bind him, and lead him whither he had no deſire to go, intimating, as the Evangeliſt tells us, *by what death he ſhould glorify God.*

Peter was well pleaſed to drink the bitter cup, and make his confeſſion as public as his denial, providing all would be ſufficient to attone for his former ſin. And ſeeing John following, he asked his great Maſter what ſhould be his fate, and whether he who had been the object of his Maſter's love in his life-time, ſhould

not

not have as honourable a death as he that had denied him? To which Jeſus replied, it doth not concern thee to know how I ſhall diſpoſe of events with regard to him: he ſhall ſee the deſtruction of the Jewiſh nation, and then go down to the chambers of the duſt in peace.

Not long after our bleſſed Saviour appeared to his diſciples at Jeruſalem, to take his laſt farewel of them, who had conſtantly attended him during his public miniſtry among the ſons of men.

He now led them out as far as Bethany, a ſmall village on Mount Olivet, where he briefly told them that they were the perſons he had choſen to be the witneſſes both of his death and reſurrection; a teſtimony which they ſhould publiſh in every part of the world. In order to which, he would after his aſcenſion into heaven, pour out his ſpirit upon them in an extraordinary manner, that they might be the better enabled to ſtruggle with that violent rage and fury with which the doctrine of the goſpel would be oppoſed by men and devils. Adding, that in the mean time they ſhould return to Jeruſalem, and there wait till thoſe miraculous powers were given them from on high.

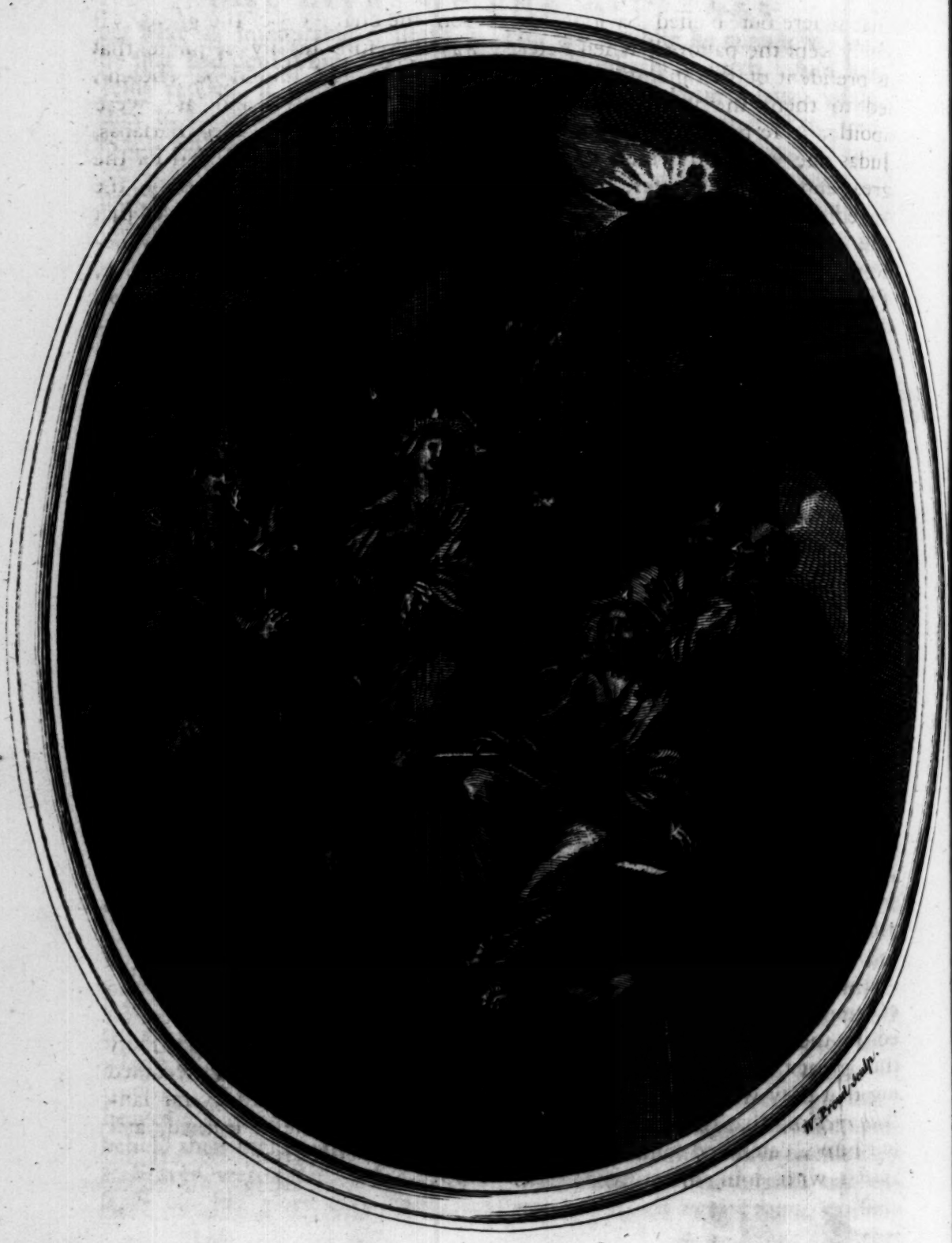
Having finiſhed this diſcourſe, he layed hands upon them, and gave them his ſolemn benediction; during which he was taken from them, and received up into the regions of the heavenly Canaan. The apoſtles who beheld their maſter viſibly aſcend into heaven, were filled with a greater ſenſe of his glory than they had ever been while he converſed with them familiarly on earth. And having performed their ſolemn adorations to him they returned to Jeruſalem with great joy, there to wait for the accompliſhment of their great Maſter's promiſe. How ſudden a change was now wrought in the minds of the apoſtles! They who were lately overwhelmed with ſorrow at the very mention of their Lord's departure from them, beheld it now with joy and triumph; they were fully ſatisfied of his glorious advancement to the right hand of Omnipotence, and of that peculiar care and providence which they were ſure he would exerciſe over them, in purſuance of thoſe great truſts he had committed to their care.

CHAP. VI.

The tranſactions of St. Peter from the aſcenſion of the bleſſed Jeſus, till the diſperſion of the Church at Jeruſalem.

THE immaculate Lamb of God having left this vale of miſery, and aſcended into the bliſsful habitations of immortality, the apoſtles began to act in conformity to the power and commiſſion they had received from him. The firſt object that engaged their attention after their return to Jeruſalem, was to fill up the vacancy in their college, lately made by the unhappy fall and apoſtacy of Judas. In order to this they called together the church, and entered into *an upper room*, poſſibly


BRITISH MUSEUM



The Descent of the Holy Ghost.

that where our bleſſed Saviour had lately kept the paſſover, when Peter, as preſident of the aſſembly, propoſed to them the choice of a new apoſtle. He put them in mind that Judas one of the diſciples of their great and beloved Maſter, being betrayed by his covetous and inſatiable temper, had lately fallen from the honour of his place and miniſtry. That this was no more than what the prophet had long ſince foretold ſhould come to paſs; and that the care of the church which had been committed to him, ſhould devolve upon another: that therefore it was highly neceſſary that the ſame perſon who had been familiarly converſant with the bleſſed Jeſus, from firſt to laſt, and conſequently, a competent witneſs both of his doctrine and miracles, his death, reſurrection, and aſcenſion, ſhould be ſubſtituted in his room.

This indeed was highly requiſite; for as no witneſs is ſo valid and ſatisfactory as the teſtimony of an eye-witneſs, as the apoſtles all along principally inſiſted on this, that they delivered nothing to the world, concerning the great Redeemer of mankind than what they themſelves had ſeen and heard, and as his riſing from the dead was a principle likely to meet with the greateſt oppoſition, and which would be the moſt difficult tenet of the goſpel to be believed by the ſons of men, they urged this great truth inceſſantly, declaring that they were *eye-witneſſes of his reſurrection*, that they had ſeen and felt him; eaten and familiarly converſed with him, after his return from the chambers of the grave. It was therefore highly requiſite that ſuch an apoſtle ſhould be choſen; and accordingly two candidates were propoſed; Joſeph, called Barſabas, and Matthias, both qualified for the great and important office of the apoſtleſhip. And having prayed that the divine providence would immediately guide and neglect their choice, they caſt lots, and the lot fell upon Matthias, who was accordingly admitted into the number of the twelve apoſtles.

After filling up this vacancy in the apoſtolick college, they ſpent their time in prayer and meditation, till the feaſt of Pentecoſt; when the promiſe of their great Maſter in ſending the Holy Ghoſt was fulfilled. The chriſtian aſſembly were met as uſual, to perform the publick ſervices of their worſhip, when ſuddenly a ſound, like that of a mighty wind, ruſhed in upon them; repreſenting the powerful efficacy of that divine ſpirit which was now to be communicated to them. After which there appeared ſmall flames of fire, which in the ſhape of cloven tongues, deſcended, and ſat upon the head of each of them, to denote that their enjoyment of this gift ſhould be conſtant and perpetual; and not like the prophets of old, who were inſpired only at ſome particular times and ſeaſons. Upon which they were all immediately filled with the Holy Ghoſt, which, in an inſtant, enabled them to ſpeak fluently ſeveral languages they had never learned, and probably never heard.

The report of ſo ſudden and ſtrange an action was ſoon ſpread through every part of Jeruſalem, which at that time was full of Jewiſh proſelytes, *devout men out of every nation under heaven, Parthians, Medes, Elamites, the dwellers in Meſopotamia and Judea, Cappadocia, Pontius and Aſia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt, the parts of Lybia and Cyrene*, from Rome, from Crete, and from Arabia. Theſe no ſooner heard of this miraculous effuſion of the Holy Spirit, than they flocked in prodigious numbers to this chriſtian aſſembly, where they were amazed to hear theſe Galileans ſpeaking to them in their own native language, ſo various, and ſo very different from one another. And it could not fail of exceedingly increaſing the wonder, to reflect on the meanneſs of the ſpeakers, who were neither aſſiſted by geuius, poliſhed by education, nor improved by uſe and cuſtom. The diſciples were deſtitute of all theſe aſſiſtances; their parts were mean, their education trifling, and their experience in ſpeaking before great aſſemblies, nothing. Yet theſe perſons ſpoke boldly, and with the greateſt propriety, in various languages. Nor were their diſcourſes filled with idle ſtories, or the ſallies of a luxuriant fancy. No, they expatiated on the great and admirable works of Omnipotence, and the myſteries of the Goſpel, which human apprehenſions could never diſcover.

This ſurprizing tranſaction had different effects on the minds of the audience; ſome conſidering it as the effect of a miracle, and others to the power and ſtrength of *new wine*.

Upon which the apoſtles all ſtood up, and, Peter, in the name of the reſt, undertook to confute this injurious calumny. He told them that this ſcandalous ſlander proceeded from the ſpirit of malice and falſhood: that their cenſure was as uncharitable as it was unjuſt: that it was early in the morning, and therefore not a time for drinking, eſpecially on a day ſet apart for devotion: that theſe extraordinary and miraculous effects were but the accompliſhment of an ancient prophecy, which the Almighty had expreſsly declared ſhould be fulfilled in the times of the Meſſiah: that Jeſus of Nazareth had evidently proved himſelf to be that great prophet, the ſon of the Moſt High, by many unqueſtionable miracles, of which they themſelves had been eye-witneſſes; and though by the permiſſion of Omnipotence, who had determined by this means, to bring about the redemption of mankind, they had wickedly crucified and ſlain him, yet God had raiſed him from the dead; nor was it conſiſtent with the juſtice and goodneſs of the Almighty, eſpecially thoſe divine predictions made concerning him, that he ſhould be confined in the chambers of the grave: David having particularly foretold, *That his fleſh ſhould reſt in hope*, that *God would not leave his ſoul in hell, neither ſuffer his Holy One to ſee corruption*; but *would make known to him the way to life*. That this prophecy could not relate to David himſelf, as he had many ages ſince been reduced

reduced to duſt, and his fleſh paſſed through the different ſtages of corruption, his tomb being yet viſible among them, and from whence he was known never to return: and therefore the prophecy muſt relate to Chriſt, having never been truly fulfilled in any but him, who both died and was riſen again, whereof they were his witneſſes. Nay, that he was not only riſen from the dead but aſcended into the higheſt heaven, and according to David's prediction, *Sat down on the right hand of God, until he had made his enemies his foot-ſtool:* which could not be primarily meant of David, as he never aſcended bodily into heaven; that therefore the whole houſe of Iſrael ought to believe, that this very Jeſus, whom they had crucified, was the perſon whom God had appointed to be the Meſſiah, the founder of the Chriſtian church, and the Saviour of the world.

This diſcourſe, tho' the firſt that St. Peter ever made in publick, deeply affected the audience, and every word, like a dagger, pierced them to the heart; ſo that they cried out, *Men and brethren, what ſhall we do?* To which Peter anſwered, The only way to expiate your guilt, obtain pardon for the many ſins you have committed, and acquire the gifts of the Holy Ghoſt, is to repent ſincerely, and be baptized into the religion of this crucified Saviour. Upon theſe terms the promiſes of the new covenant, ratified by the death of the Son of God, will belong to you and your children, and to all that ſincerely believe and embrace the goſpel. He alſo uſed the moſt forcible and endearing expreſſions to prevail on them to liſten to the inviting calls of the Son of God, and by that means to ſave themſelves from that unavoidable ruin and deſtruction which would ſhortly fall on the heads of the wicked and headſtrong generation of unbelieving Jews.

The effect of this diſcourſe was equally wonderful and ſurpriſing; for vaſt numbers of thoſe, who before ridiculed the religion of Jeſus, now acknowledged him for their Saviour, and flew to him for refuge from the impending ſtorm: and St. Luke tells us, that there were that day added to the church no leſs than three thouſand ſouls, who were all baptized and received into the flock of the great Shepherd of Iſrael, the biſhop of our ſouls. A quick and plentiful harveſt indeed! *This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.*

Soon after this wonderful converſation, Peter and John going up to the temple about three in the afternoon, near the concluſion of one of the ſolemn hours of prayer, they ſaw a poor impotent cripple, near forty years of age, who had been lame from his birth, lying at *the beautiful gate of the temple*, and aſking alms of thoſe who entered the ſacred edifice. This miſerable object moved their compaſſion; and Peter beholding him with attention, ſaid, the riches of this world, the ſilver and gold ſo highly coveted by the ſons of men, are not in my power to beſtow; but I poſſeſs the power of reſtoring life and health, and am ready to

to aſſiſt thee. Then taking the man by the hand, commanded him in the name of *Jeſus of Nazareth to riſe up and walk.* Immediately the nerves and ſinews were enlarged, and the ſeveral parts of the diſeaſed member performed its natural functions. Upon which the man accompanied them into the temple, walking, leaping, and praiſing God.

So ſtrange and extraordinary a cure filled the minds of the people with admiration, and their curioſity drew them round the apoſtles to view the men who had performed it. Peter, ſeeing the multitude gathering round them, took the opportuuity of ſpeaking to them in the following manner: "Men and brethren, this "remarkable cure ſhould not excite "your admiration of us, as if we "had performed it by our own "power. It was wrought in the "name of Jeſus of Nazareth, our "crucified Maſter, by the power of "that very Chriſt, that holy and juſt "perſon, whom you yourſelves de-"nied, and delivered to Pilate, nay, "and preferred a murderer before "him, when the governor was de-"ſirous of letting him go. But tho' "you have put him to death, yet "we are witneſſes that he hath raiſ-"ed him again from the dead, and "that he is aſcended into heaven, "where he will remain till the great "and tremendous day of general "reſtitution. This I know was done "by you and our rulers through "ignorance, not being thoroughly "convinced of the greatneſs and "divinity of his perſon; an igno-"rance by which the great and "righteous deſigns of Omnipotence "were brought about, and the pro-"phecies concerning the perſon and "ſufferings of the Meſſiah deliver-"ed by Moſes, Samuel, and all the "prophets *ſince the world began*, have "been accompliſhed. But now it "is high time to repent and turn "to God, that your crying ſins "may be forgiven, that when the "Meſſiah ſhall ſhortly appear to "execute judgment upon the Jewiſh "nation, it may be a time of com-"fort to you, as it will be of ven-"geance and deſtruction to others. "You ſhould remember that you "are the peculiar perſons to whom "the bleſſings and the promiſes "primarily belong, and to whom "the Almighty firſt ſent his ſon, "that he might ſhower on you his "bleſſings, by *turning you away* "*from your iniquities.*"

While Peter was ſpeaking to the people in one part of the temple, John was, in all probability, doing the ſame in the other: and the ſucceſs plainly indicated how powerful the preaching of the apoſtles was; five thouſand perſons embracing the doctrines of the goſpel, and acknowledged the crucified Jeſus for their Lord and Saviour.

Such amazing ſucceſs could not fail of exerting the attention and envy of the rulers of Iſrael. Accordingly the prieſts and Sadducees repaired to the Roman magiſtrate, and intimated to him that, in all probability, this concourſe of people would prove the cauſe of a tumult and inſurrection. Upon this information, the captain of the temple ſeized on

the apoſtles, and caſt them into priſon.

The next day they were carried before the Jewiſh Sanhedrim; and being asked by what power and authority they had done this, Peter boldly anſwered, "Be it known "unto you, and to all the deſcen- "dants of Jacob, that this miracle "was wrought wholly in the name "of Jeſus of Nazareth, whom ye "yourſelves have crucified and ſlain, "and whom the Almighty hath "raiſed again from the dead. This "is the ſtone which you builders "refuſed, and which is become the "head of the corner. Nor is there "any other way by which you, or "any of the ſons of men, can be "ſaved, but by this crucified Sa- "viour."

This boldneſs of the apoſtles was admired by all, even by the court of Sanhedrim. And it ſhould be remembred, that theſe very judges were the perſons who had ſo lately condemned the bleſſed Jeſus himſelf, and had no other way of juſtifying their proceedings than by a ſecond act of cruelty; that the apoſtles did not charge them with the crime of crucifying the Son of God in ſecret, but in the open court of judicature, and in the hearing of all the people.

The court after beholding them with a kind of aſtoniſhment, remembered that they had ſeen him with Jeſus of Nazareth, and therefore, ordered them to withdraw, while they debated among themſelves what was proper to be done. It was impoſſible to deny the miracle; for it was performed before all the people, and the perſon on whom it was wrought, no ſtranger in Jeruſalem. They therefore reſolved to charge them ſtrictly not to preach any more in the name of Jeſus. Accordingly they were again called in, and acquainted with this reſolution of the council. To which the apoſtles anſwered, That as they had received a commiſſion from heaven, to declare to all nations what they had ſeen and heard, it was certainly their duty to *obey God rather than man.*

This was a fair appeal to the conſciences of their very judges; but theſe rulers of Iſrael, inſtead of being ſatisfied with it, would, in all probability, have proceeded to a greater violence, had not the people's veneration for the apoſtles checked their malice. So that all they dared to do was to enforce their menaces, and diſmiſs them.

When the apoſtles were returned to their brethren, they informed them of the treatment they had met with from the Jewiſh magiſtrates. Upon which they all joined in prayer to the Almighty for an extraordinary ſupply of courage and aſſiſtance, to enable them to execute their commiſſion in theſe perilous times, and plant the religion of their crucified Saviour. Nor were their prayers offered in vain; for before they had concluded their fervent addreſſes to the throne of grace, the houſe was again ſhaken with a mighty wind, as on the day of Pentecoſt; and they were inſtantly repleniſhed with freſh meaſures of the Holy Ghoſt; and notwithſtanding all the threatnings of the Jewiſh rulers, found themſelves

enabled to preach the Goſpel of their great and beloved Maſter, with more boldneſs than ever.

Their intrepidity had the deſired effect; the church increaſed exceedingly; and that ſo great a company, eſpecially the poor and needy might be maintained, the profeſſors of the religion of the holy Jeſus ſold their eſtates, and brought the money to the apoſtles, that they might depoſit it in one common treaſury, and from thence ſupply the ſeveral exigencies of the church.

But hypocriſy was not unknown among the profeſſors of religion, even in theſe primitive times. Ananias and his wife Saphira, having embraced the doctrines of the Goſpel, pretended to follow the free and generous ſpirit of theſe times, by conſecrating and devoting their eſtate to the honour of God, and the neceſſities of the church. Accordingly they ſold their poſſeſſions, and brought part of the money and laid it at the apoſtle's feet; hoping to deceive them, though guided by the ſpirit of Omnipotence. But Peter, at his firſt coming in, asked Ananias how he could ſuffer Satan to fill his heart with ſuch enormous wickedneſs, as to think to *deceive the Holy Ghoſt?* That before it was ſold it was wholly in his own power; and afterwards the money entirely at his own diſpoſal: ſo that his action was capable of no other interpretation, than that he had not only abuſed and injured man, but mocked the Almighty himſelf, who he muſt know was privy to his moſt ſecret thoughts.

The apoſtle had no ſooner finiſhed, than Ananias, to the great terror of all that were preſent, fell down dead by a ſtroke from heaven.

Not long after his wife came in, whom Peter reproved in the ſame manner he had done her husband, adding, that he ſhould immediately end her life in the ſame awful manner; upon which ſhe was ſmitten by the hand of Omnipotence, and fell down dead: ſharing with her husband in the puniſhment, as ſhe had before in the heinous crime. This remarkable inſtance of ſeverity, filled all the converts with fear and trembling, and prevented in a great meaſure that hypocriſy and diſſimulation, by which others might flatter themſelves to deceive the church.

But ſuch inſtances of ſeverity were very extraordinary; the power of the apoſtles was generally exerted in works of mercy and beneficence towards the ſons and daughters of affliction. They cured all kinds of diſeaſes and caſt out devils; ſo that they brought the ſick into the ſtreets, and laid them on beds and couches, that the ſhadow at leaſt of Peter as he paſſed by, might cover ſome of them; well knowing, a ſingle touch or word from either of the apoſtles was ſufficient to remove the moſt inveterate diſeaſe.

Such aſtoniſhing miracles could not fail of contributing to the propagation of the Goſpel, and to convince the world, that the apoſtles were far more conſiderable perſons than they at firſt took them to be; and

and that poverty and meanneſs may be blended with true worth and genuine greatneſs. How ſmall and inſignificant is the power and dignity of an earthly monarch, when compared to this glory of the apoſtles! And how contemptible were the triumphs of a Pompey and a Cæſar, when placed in competition with the greatneſs and majeſty of St. Peter, who converted the world from idolatry and the worſhip of devils, and withdrew the veil of ignorance from the underſtandings of the human race; not by the power of armies, nor the inſinuating artifices of pomp and grandeur, but by faith in the power of his Saviour.

But the ſtupendous works of the apoſtles and the growing numbers of the church alarmed the rulers of Iſrael, who ſeized the apoſtles and caſt them into priſon. Their power, however, was limited, and like the drop of a bucket to the ocean, when oppoſed to the Almighty arm of the great Jehovah. The priſon-doors, though faſtened with the utmoſt caution, opened of themſelves at the approach of a meſſenger from the courts of heaven, who commanded the apoſtles to leave the dungeon, repair to the temple, and preach the glad tidings of the Goſpel to the people.

The officers returning in the morning, found the priſon doors ſhut and guarded, but the priſoners gone. This remarkable circumſtance greatly alarmed them, and they repaired to the council to acquaint them with what had happened. The rulers were aſtoniſhed at the news; but hearing that the apoſtles were teaching in the temple, they ſent an officer to bring them, without the leaſt violence to their perſons, before the Sanhedrim. Their orders were ſoon obeyed, and the diſciples of Jeſus placed before the ſame court that had ſo lately condemned their Maſter.

The apoſtles being thus brought before the Sanhedrim, the high-prieſt asked them how they dared to propagate a doctrine they had lately ſo ſtrictly charged them not to preach: to which Peter, in the name of the reſt replied, "We certainly "ought to obey God rather than "man. And though you have ſo "barbarouſly and contumelioufly "treated the Saviour of the world, "yet God hath raiſed him up to be "a prince and a Saviour, to give "both repentance and remiſſion of "ſins. And of theſe things both "we, and the miraculous powers "which the Holy Ghoſt hath con-"ferred on all chriſtians, are wit-"neſſes."

This anſwer, delivered with remarkable boldneſs, exaſperated the council, and they began to conſult how they might deſtroy them. But Gamaliel, a grave and learned counſellor, after commanding the apoſtles to withdraw, deſired them to proceed with caution in an affair of this nature; reminding them that ſeveral perſons had already raiſed parties, and drawn great numbers of perſons after them; but that every one of them had miſcarried, and all their deſigns were rendered abortive, without the interpoſition of that court. That they would therefore do well to let the apoſtles alone;

for if their doctrines and designs were of human invention they would come to nothing; but if they were of God all their powers and policies would be of no effect, and sad experience would too soon convince them, that they had themselves opposed the counsels of the Most High.

This prudent and rational advice, had the desired success; the council were satisfied, and after commanding the apostles to be scourged, they strictly charged them to preach no more in the name of Jesus, and set them at liberty. But this charge had little effect on the disciples of the blessed Jesus; they returned home in triumph, rejoicing that they were thought worthy to suffer in so righteous a cause, and to undergo shame and reproach for so kind and so powerful a master. Nor could all the opposition of men, blended with the malice of the powers of darkness, discourage them from performing their duty to the Almighty, or lessen their zeal for preaching, both in publick and private, the doctrine of the gospel.

CHAP. VI.

The transactions of St. Peter from the dispersion of the church at Jerusalem, till his contest with St. Paul at Antioch.

THE church at Jerusalem had hitherto been tossed with gentle storms, but now it was overtaken by a more violent tempest, which commenced with the death of the Protomartyr Stephen, and was now carried on with greater violence; nor did it end but with the dispersion of the disciples, by which means the glad tidings of the gospel, which had till now been confined to Judea, and the professors of it hid in secret places, was preached to the Gentile world, and an ancient prophecy fulfilled, which says, *Out of Sion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.* Thus does the Almighty bring good out of evil, and cause the malicious intentions of the wicked to redound to his praise.

Among the dispersed followers of the blessed Jesus, Philip the deaco retired to Samaria, where he preached the gospel, and confirmed his doctrine by many miraculous cures, and casting out devils. In this city was one Simon, who, by magick arts and diabolical sorceries, was beheld with admiration by the people; and some considered him as the *great power of God*, a name he blasphemously gave himself, pretending to be the first and chief deity, or what every nation considered as the supreme God.

This wicked mortal, hearing the sermons of Philip, and beholding the miracles wrought by him, became a convert to the religion of Jesus, and was baptized with the others who had embraced the christian doctrine.

The apostles who continued at Jerusalem, weresoon informed of this remarkable success of Philip's ministry at Samaria, and thought it necessary

neceſſary to ſend him aſſiſtance. Accordingly Peter and John were deputed to this infant church, who having prayed and laid their hands on the new converts, they received the Holy Ghoſt. Such miraculous gifts aſtoniſhed the magician, and deſirous of obtaining the ſame privilege, he offered the diſciples money to inveſt him with this power, that on whomſoever he laid his hands he might receive the Holy Ghoſt. But Peter, who perceived the inſincerity of his heart, rejected his offer with ſcorn and deteſtation. "*Thy money*, "ſaid that great apoſtle, *periſh with* "*thee*. And as thy heart is full of "hypocriſy and deceit, thou canſt "have no ſhare nor portion in ſo "great a privilege. Thou wouldeſt "do well to repent for ſo monſtrous "a crime, and ſincerely apply thy-"ſelf to ſeek the Almighty, that the "thoughts of thy heart may be for-"given thee; for I perceive that "thy temper and diſpoſition of mind "is ſtill vicious and corrupt, and "that thou art yet bound by the "chains of iniquity, and in a ſtate "diſpleaſing to the Almighty, and "dangerous to thy ſelf."

Simon was terrified at this ſpeech of St. Peter; his conſcience flew in his face, and he prayed the apoſtles to make interceſſions for him to the throne of grace, that the Almighty might pardon his ſin, and not inflict on him thoſe heavy judgments.

The apoſtles did not ſtay any longer in Samaria than was neceſſary to confirm the new converts in the faith they had embraced, and to preach the glad tidings of ſalvation in the adjacent villages; after which they returned to Jeruſalem, to aſſiſt the reſt of the diſciples with their power.

The ſtorm, tho' violent, being at length blown over, the church enjoyed a time of calmneſs and ſerenity: during which St. Peter went to viſit the churches lately planted in thoſe parts, by the diſciples whom the perſecution had diſperſed. And at his arrival at Lydda, he miraculouſly healed Æneas, who had been afflicted with the palſy, and confined to his bed eight years: but on Peter's bidding him ariſe in the name of Jeſus, he was immediately reſtored to perfect health. Nor was the ſucceſs of this miracle confined to Æneas and his family; the fame of it was blazed thro' all the neighbouring country, and many believed in the doctrine of the Son of God. It was even known at Joppa, a ſea-port town about ſix miles from Lydda, and the brethren immediately ſent for Peter, on the following melancholy occaſion. Tabitha, whoſe Greek name was Dorcas, a woman venerable for her piety, and extenſive charity, was newly dead, to the great loſs of all mankind who love the paths of virtue, eſpecially the poor and afflicted, who were ſupported by her charity.

At Peter's arrival he found her dreſſed for her funeral ſolemnity, and ſurrounded by mournful widows, who ſhewed the coats and garments wherewith ſhe had clothed them, the monuments of her liberality. But Peter put them all out, and

and kneeling down prayed with the utmoſt fervency; then turning to the body, he commanded her to ariſe, and taking her by the hand, preſented her in perfect health to her friends and others, who were aſſembled to pay their laſt duties to ſo good a woman. This miracle confirmed thoſe who had newly embraced the goſpel of Jeſus, and converted many more to the faith. After which he ſtayed a conſiderable time at Joppa, lodging in the houſe of one Simon a tanner.

During his abode in this city, one day when he was offering up his prayers to the Almighty, he found himſelf hungry and called for meat; but while it was dreſſing for him, he fell into a trance, wherein was preſented to him a large ſheet let down from heaven, containing all ſorts of creatures clean and unclean; and at the ſame time a voice ſaid to him, *ariſe Peter, kill and eat.* But the apoſtle, as yet tenacious of the rites and inſtitutions of the Moſaick law, anſwered, that his conſcience refuſed to comply, having never eaten any thing that was common or unclean. To which the voice replied, That it was unjuſt to conſider that as common which God had cleanſed. This was done thrice, after which the veſſel was again drawn up to heaven, and the viſion diſappeared. By this ſymbolical repreſentation St. Peter was given to underſtand, that the Almighty was now going to ſend him on a new embaſſy, which the Spirit at the ſame time commanded him to undertake. While he was ſtill wondering with himſelf what the event would prove, three meſſengers knocked at the gate, enquiring for him; and from them he received the following account. That Cornelius a Roman, captain of a band of Italian ſoldiers at Cæſarea, a perſon of great piety and religion, one who had been long a proſelyte of the gate, had, by an immediate command from God, ſent for him.

The next day Peter, accompanied with ſome of the brethren, went with the meſſengers, and the day after arrived at Cæſarea. Cornelius, having information of his coming, had ſummoned his friends and kindred to Cæſarea; and at the apoſtle's entering his houſe fell at his feet, a method of addreſs frequent in the Eaſtern countries. But Peter, who conſidered that honour as due only to the Almighty, lift him up, and declared to the company the reaſon of his coming, ſaying he had lately learned, that there was no reſpect of perſons with God.

When the apoſtle had ended his ſpeech, Cornelius, at his requeſt, related the particular reaſon for his ſending for him. "Four days ago, "ſaid this Roman officer, being "converſant in the duties of faſting "and prayer, an angel from the "courts of heaven appeared to me, "declaring that my prayers and alms "were come up as a memorial be-"fore the throne of the Moſt High; "and at the ſame time ordered me "to ſend to Joppa for one Simon "Peter, who lodged in the houſe "of a tanner near the ſea-ſide, who "would give me farther informa-

" tion in the duties of religion. Ac-
" cordingly I made no heſitation
" to obey the heavenly meſſenger;
" I ſent immediately for thee; and
" now thou art come, and we are met
" together to hear what inſtructions
" thou haſt to communicate."

This relation of the Roman centurion aſtoniſhed the apoſtle; but he was ſoon convinced that God had broken down the partition wall, and no longer maintained a peculiar kindneſs for the ſons of Jacob; that it was not the nation, but the religion; not the external quality of the man, but the internal temper of the mind, that recommended the human race to the favour of Omnipotence; that the devout and pious, the righteous and the good man, whatever part of the earth he may inhabit, is the favourite of heaven; that God as highly reſpects a juſt and virtuous man in the barren waſtes of Sythia, as on the mountain of Sion: that the reconciling and making peace betwen God and man by Jeſus Chriſt, was the doctrine publiſhed by the prophets of old; and that God had now anointed and conſecrated Jeſus of Nazareth with divine powers, in the exerciſe whereof he went about doing good to the children of men: that they had ſeen all he had done among the Jews, whom though they had ſlain and crucified, yet that God had raiſed him again the third day, and had openly ſhewed him to his apoſtles and followers, whom he had choſen to be his peculiar witneſſes, and whom he had accordingly permitted to eat and drink with him after his reſurrection, commanding them to preach the Goſpel to all mankind, and to teſtify that he was the perſon whom God had ordained to be the great judge of the world; that all the prophets with one conſent bore witneſs of him; and that this Jeſus is he, in whoſe name whoſoever believes, would certainly receive remiſſion of ſins.

While Peter was thus preaching to them, the Holy Ghoſt fell upon the greateſt part of his hearers, enabling them to ſpeak ſeveral languages, and in them to magnify the great Creator of the ſons of men. At this the Jews, who accompanied Peter, marvelled exceedingly, to ſee that the gifts of the Holy Ghoſt were poured upon the Gentiles; and Peter ſeeing this told the company, that he knew no reaſon why theſe perſons ſhould not be baptized, as they had received the Holy Ghoſt as well as they; and accordingly he gave orders that they ſhould be baptized, and to confirm them in the Holy Faith they had embraced, he ſtaid with them ſome time.

This action of St. Peter, was conſidered in various lights by the brethren at Jeruſalem, who being but lately converted to the Chriſtian faith, were zealouſly attached to the religious ceremonies of the Moſaic inſtitution, and therefore, moſt of them ſeverely charged Peter at his return, as being too familiar with the Gentile. How powerful is the prejudice of education! The Jews had for many ages, conceived an inveterate oppoſition againſt the Gentiles, conſidering them as perſons hated by the Almighty, who had

choſen

choſen them for his peculiar people. The law of Moſes indeed, enjoined them to be kind to their own nation in preference to all others; and the rites and inſtitutions of their religion, and the peculiar form of their commonwealth, rendered them very different from the inhabitants of other countries: a ſeparation which in after ages they contracted into a much narrower compaſs. They were alſo tenaciouſly proud of their external privileges in being the deſcendants of Abraham, the friend of God; and therefore looked upon the reſt of the world as reprobates, proudly refuſing to hold any converſation with them, and even to ſhew them the common kindneſſes of humanity.

It is therefore no wonder that they were highly diſpleaſed with St. Peter; nor would he have been able to have defended his conduct in a ſatisfactory manner, had not he been charged with a peculiar commiſſion from the Almighty for extending the privileges of the Goſpel to the gentile world. But he had no ſooner given them an impartial account of the whole tranſaction, than they immediately changed their diſpleaſure againſt him into thanks, to the beneficient father of the human race, who had granted to the Gentiles alſo repentance unto life eternal.

Peter having thus finiſhed his viſitation to the new-planted churches returned to Jeruſalem, and was indefatigable in inſtructing the converts in the religion of Jeſus, and preaching the glad tidings of ſalvation to the deſcendants of Jacob. But he did not long continue in this pleaſing courſe; Herod Agrippa, in order to ingratiate himſelf into the favour of the Jews, put St. James to death. And finding the action was highly acceptable to that ſtiff-necked people, he reſolved to extend his cruelty to Peter, and accordingly caſt him into priſon. But the churches were inceſſant in their prayers to God for his ſafety; and what have mortals to fear, when guarded by the hand of Omnipotence! Herod was perſuaded he ſhould ſoon accompliſh his intention, and ſacrifice Peter to the inſatiable cruelty of the Jews. But the night before this intended execution, a meſſenger from the courts of heaven viſited the gloomy horrors of the dungeon, where he found Peter aſleep between his keepers. The angel raiſed him up, and took off his chains, ordered him to gird on his garments, and follow him. Peter obeyed, and having paſſed through the firſt and ſecond watch they came to the iron gate leading to the city, which opened to them of its own accord. The angel alſo accompanied him thro' one of the ſtreets, and then departed from him; on which Peter came to himſelf and perceived that it was no viſion; but that his great and beloved Maſter had really ſent a meſſenger from above, and releaſed him from priſon. He therefore repaired to the houſe of Mary, where the church was aſſembled, and offering up their prayers to the throne of grace for his ſafety. On his knocking at the door, a maid who came to let him in, knowing his voice, ran back

back to tell them that Peter was at the door; which they at first considered as the effect of fancy; but the damsel continuing to affirm that it was really true, they concluded it was his angel, or some messenger sent to him from the court of heaven. But on opening the door, they were convinced of their mistake, finding that it was really Peter himself, who briefly told them how he was delivered; and desiring them to inform his brethren of his being set at liberty, retired to another place.

In the morning the officers came from Herod to the prison, with orders to bring Peter out to the people, who were gathered together to behold his execution. But when they came to the prison the keepers informed them that the apostle had made his escape; which so exasperated Herod, that he commanded those who were entrusted with the care of the prisoner to be put to death.

Some time after this miraculous deliverance of St. Peter, a controversy arose between the Jewish and the Gentile converts, with regard to the observation of the Mosaic law; a dispute which gave great uneasiness to the minds of many persons; the Jews zealously contending that it was absolutely necessary to salvation to be circumcised, and observe the precepts of the ceremonial law, as well as those of the Gospel. To compose this difference, it was thought necessary to summon a general council of the apostles and brethren to meet at Jerusalem. This was accordingly done, and the case thoroughly debated. At last Peter stood up, and declared that God having chosen him out of all the apostles to be the first preacher of the Gospel among the Gentiles, God, who was best able to judge of the hearts of men, had borne witness to them, that they were accepted of him, by giving them his holy spirit as well as he had done the Jews; and consequently, that there was no difference between them. They could not therefore place the Jewish yoke, which neither they nor their fathers were able to bear, upon the necks of the disciples, without tempting and provoking the Almighty, who had given sufficient reasons to believe, that the Gentiles, as well as the Jews, would be saved by the grace of the Gospel.

This declaration of St. Peter convinced the church, and it was unanimously decreed, that no other burden than the temporary observance of a few particular precepts, equally convenient to the Jew and Gentile, should be imposed on them. And the decision was drawn up into a synodical epistle, and sent to the several churches for allaying the heats and controversies this dispute had occasioned.

Soon after this council, Peter left Jerusalem, and went down to Antioch; where, using the liberty given him by the Gospel, he freely eat and conversed with the Gentile proselytes, considering them now as *fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God.* This he had been taught by the vision of the sheet let down from heaven; this had been lately decreed at Jerusalem; this he had be-

before practiſed with regard to Cornelius and his family, and juſtified the action to the ſatisfaction of his accuſers; and this he had freely and innocently done at Antioch, till ſome of the Jewiſh brethren coming thither, he, for fear of offending them, withdrew himſelf from the Gentiles, as if it had been unlawful for him to hold converſation with uncircumciſed perſons; notwithſtanding he knew, and was fully ſatisfied that our bleſſed Saviour had broken down the wall of partition between the Jew and Gentile.

By thus acting againſt the light of his own mind and judgment, he condemned what he had approved, and deſtroyed the ſuperſtructure he had before erected; at the ſame time he confirmed the Jewiſh zealots in their inveterate errors, filled the minds of the Gentiles with ſcruples, and their conſciences with fears. Nor was this all, the old prejudices between Jew and Gentile were revived, and the whole number of Jewiſh converts following the apoſtle's example, ſeparated themſelves from the company of the Gentile chriſtians. Nay, even Barnabas himſelf was carried away by this torrent of unwarrantable practice.

St. Paul was now at Antioch, and reſolutely oppoſed St. Peter to his face; he publickly reproved him as a perſon worthy to be blamed for his groſs prevarication. He reaſoned and ſeverely expoſtulated with him that he who was himſelf a Jew, and conſequently under a more immediate obligation of obſerving the Moſaic law, ſhould throw off the yoke himſelf, and at the ſame time endeavour to impoſe it on the Gentiles, who were never under neceſſity of obſerving the ceremonies of the Iſraelites. A ſevere tho' an impartial charge; but the remarkable eagerneſs of St. Paul to place things on a proper foundation, though he ſucceeded for the preſent, made a great noiſe afterwards in the world, and gave occaſion to the enemies of Chriſtianity to repreſent the whole as a compact of forgery and deceit: of ſuch pernicious conſequence are diſputes among the princes of the church, and ſo fatal are the effects of puſillanimity, and a fear of offending perſon bigotted to inſignificant ceremonies.

CHAP. VIII.

The tranſactions of St. Peter from the end of the ſacred hiſtory, till his martyrdom at Rome.

WE have thus far had an infallible guide to direct us in writing the life of this great apoſtle; but here the ſacred hiſtorian hath left us, and therefore we muſt have recourſe to the ancients for materials to finiſh the ſuperſtructure.

Some time before this conteſt at Antioch, St. Peter preached the Goſpel in various parts of the world, enlarging the kingdom of his great Maſter, and ſpreading the glad tidings of ſalvation among the inhabitants of various countries; and among the reſt thoſe of Rome, then the miſtreſs of the world. In that capital he is ſaid to have continued ſeveral years, till the emperor Claudius, taking advantage of ſome ſeditious tumults raiſed by the Jews, publiſhed an edict, whereby they were baniſhed from

from Rome, and among the reſt St. Peter, who returned to Jeruſalem, and was preſent at the ſynod already mentioned. But how long he continued in the capital of Judea is uncertain; for we have no account of his tranſactions for many years. This however is certain, that he was not idle in the ſervice of his great Maſter; and Euſebius tells us, from Metaphraſtes, that he viſited ſeveral of the weſtern parts, and particularly this iſland of Great Britain; where he continued ſeveral years, ſpreading the glad tidings of ſalvation in theſe remote parts, and converting the ſeveral nations to the chriſtian faith.

But however this be, whether St. Peter was or was not in England, it is certain that towards the latter end of Nero's reign he returned to Rome, where he found the minds of the people ſtrangely bewitched, and hardened againſt the doctrines of the Goſpel by the ſorceries of Simon Magus, who, as I have already obſerved, was chaſtiſed by Peter for his wickedneſs at Samaria. This monſter of impiety not only oppoſed the preaching of the apoſtles, but alſo did all in his power to render them and their doctrine odious to the emperor. St. Peter, foreſeeing that the calumnies of Simon and his adherents would haſten his death, took the greater pains, and was ſtill more aſſiduous to confirm thoſe he had been any ways inſtrumental in converting in the ſublime truths they had received. And in order to this ſtrongly oppoſed the great deceiver of mankind: for in the laſt year of his life, he ſeems to have wrote his two epiſtles to the diſperſed Jews in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, and Bythinia; and in an appointed encounter with Simon diſcovered his magical impoſtures, and through the power and aſſiſtance of the Almighty, brought him to an exemplary and miſerable death.

This happened in the following manner: The apoſtle meeting with Simon at Rome, and finding him ſtill pretending to be ſome great one, even the promiſed Meſſiah, he could not help oppoſing zealouſly his preſumptuous arrogancy. But Simon, more incenſed by the oppoſition, offered to give the people ſuch an evident demonſtration of his being what he pretended, that he would place the whole beyond contradiction, by immediately aſcending up to heaven. Upon this, by the help of two inviſible devils, as in a chariot of fire, he raiſed himſelf from the errth, and ſeemed to be flying towards the regions of heaven. St. Peter and St. Paul beholding the deluſion; had recourſe to prayers, and obtained their petitions of the Almighty, namely, that the impoſtor ſhould be ſoon be ſoon diſcovered for the honour of the bleſſed Jeſus. Accordingly, at the command of God, the devils left him, and he, being deſerted fell headlong to the ground; by which he was ſo bruiſed that he died in a very ſhort time.

Such was the end of this miſerable, this unhappy man; but the news of it no ſooner reached the emperor's ears, than he vowed revenge, both for the death of his favourite, and the endeavours uſed by the

apoſtles to *turn mankind from darkneſs unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God.* Accordingly he iſſued orders for apprehending St. Peter, together with his companion St. Paul. St. Ambroſe tells us, that when the people perceived the danger to which St. Peter was now expoſed, prayed him to quit Rome, and repair for a while to ſome ſecure retreat, that his life might be preſerved for the benefit of the church. Peter, with great reluctance, yielded to their intreaties, and made his eſcape by night: but as he paſſed the gate, he was met by a perſon in the form of his great and beloved Maſter, and on his asking him whether he was going, anſwered, *to Rome to be crucified a ſecond time.* Which Peter taking for a reproof of his cowardice, returned again into the city, was ſoon after apprehended, and caſt, together with St. Paul, into the Mamertine priſon. Here they were confined eight or nine months, but ſpent their time in the exerciſes of religion, eſpecially in preaching to the priſoners, and thoſe who reſorted to them. And during this confinement, it is generally thought St. Peter wrote his ſecond Epiſtle to the diſperſed Jews; wherein he endeavours to confirm them in the belief and practice of Chriſtianity, and to fortify them againſt thoſe poiſonous and pernicious principles and actions which even then began to break in upon the chriſtian church.

Nero at laſt returned from Acaia, entered Rome in triumph; and ſoon after his arrival, reſolved that the apoſtles ſhould fall as victims and ſacrifices to his cruelty and revenge. While the fatal ſtroke was daily expected, the chriſtians in Rome were continually offering up their prayers to heaven to protect thoſe two holy perſons. But the Almighty was now willing to put an end to their ſorrows; and after ſealing the truth they had preached with their own blood, to receive them into the regions of eternal bliſs and happineſs, and exchange their crowns of martyrdom for crowns of glory. Accordingly they were both condemned by the cruel emperor of Rome; and St. Peter having taken his farewel of the brethren, eſpecially of St. Paul, was taken from the priſon, and led to the top of the Vatican mount near the Tiber, where he was ſentenced to ſurrender up his life on the croſs.

At his coming to the place of execution, he begged the favour of the officers, that he might not be crucified in the common manner, but with his head downward; affirming that he was unworthy to ſuffer in the ſame poſture in which his Lord had ſuffered before him. This requeſt was accordingly complied with; and the great apoſtle St. Peter ſurrendered up his ſoul into the hands of his great and beneficent Maſter, who came down from heaven to ranſom mankind from deſtruction, and open for them the gates of the heavenly Canaan.

His body, being taken down from the croſs, is ſaid to have been embalmed by Mercellinus, the presbyter, after the manner of the Jews, and then buried in the Vatican, near the

the Appian way, two miles from Rome. Here it remained till the time of pope Cornelius, who reconveyed it to the Vatican, where it reſted in an obſcure place, till the reign of Conſtantine, who, from the great reverence he entertained for the chriſtian religion, erected many churches at Rome, and rebuilt and vaſtly enlarged the Vatican in honour of St. Peter. He alſo greatly enriched the church with gifts and ornaments; and it has continued increaſing in riches and ſplendor every age, till it is become one of the wonders of the world.

If we conſider St. Peter as a man, there ſeems to have been a natural eagerneſs predominant in his temper, which animated his ſoul to the moſt bold and generous undertakings. It was this, in a great meaſure, that prompted him to be ſo very forward to ſpeak, and to return anſwers ſometimes before he had well conſidered them. It was this that made him expoſe his perſon to the moſt imminent dangers, promiſe thoſe great things in behalf of his maſter, reſolutely draw his ſword in his quarrel againſt a whole band of ſoldiers, and wound a ſervant of the high-prieſt; nay he had, in all probability, attempted greater things, had not his Lord reſtrained his impetuoſity, and given a ſeaſonable check to his fury.

If we conſider him as a diſciple of the bleſſed Jeſus, we ſhall find him exemplary in the great duties of religion. His humility and lowlineſs of mind were remarkable. With what a paſſionate earneſtneſs, on the conviction of a miracle, did he beg of our bleſſed Saviour to depart from him; thinking it unworthy the Son of God to come near ſo vile a ſinner! When the great Redeemer of mankind, by that amazing condeſcenſion, ſtooped ſo low as to waſh the feet of his diſciples, Peter could not be perſuaded to admit his performing it, thinking it highly improper that ſo great a perſon ſhould ſubmit to ſuch a ſervile office towards a perſon ſo mean as himſelf; nor could he be induced to admit of it, till his great Maſter threatened to deprive him of his favour. When Cornelius, the Roman centurion, heightened in his opinion of him, by an immediate command from the Almighty concerning him, would have treated him with more than ordinary marks of eſteem and veneration, he was ſo far from complying with it, that he declared he was nothing more than a mortal like himſelf. His love and zeal for his maſter were remarkable; he thought he could never expreſs either at too high a rate; venturing on the greateſt perils, and expoſing his life to the moſt imminent dangers. His forwardneſs to own his great Maſter for the Meſſiah and Son of the Moſt High was remarkably great; and it was this that drew from his Lord that honourable encomium, *Bleſſed art thou Simon Bar-jona.* But his courage and conſtancy in confeſſing Chriſt, even before his moſt inveterate enemies, was ſtill greater after he had recovered himſelf from his fall. How plainly does he tell the Jews that they were the murderers and crucifiers

fiers of the Lord of Glory? Nay, with what an undaunted courage, with what an heroick greatneſs of ſoul did he tell the very Sanhedrim, who had ſentenced and condemned him, that they were guilty of his death, and that they had no other way of eſcaping the vengeance of the Almighty, but by the merits of that very Jeſus, whom they had crucified and put to death.

Laſtly, if we conſider him as an apoſtle, as a paſtor, or ſhepherd of the ſouls of men, we ſhall find him faithful and diligent in his office, zealouſly endeavouring to inſtruct the ignorant, reduce the erroneous, ſtrengthen the weak, confirm the ſtrong, reclaim the vicious, and turn the children of men into the paths of righteouſneſs. He never omitted any opportunity of preaching to the people, and ſpreading the glad tidings of the Goſpel among the human race; and ſo powerful were his diſcourſes, that he converted many thouſands at one time. How many painful journies and dangerous voyages did he undertake! with what unconquerable patience did he endure the greateſt trials, ſurmount every difficulty, and remove every diſpoſition, that he might plant the goſpel of his beloved Maſter! Never refuſing even to lay down his life to promote it. Nor was he only aſſiduous to perform theſe duties himſelf; he was alſo careful to animate others to do the like, earneſtly preſſing and perſuading the paſtors and governors of the church *to feed the flock of God*, to labour freely for the good of the ſouls of men, and not undertake thoſe offices to acquire advantages to themſelves; beſeeching them to treat the flock committed to their care with lenity and gentleneſs, and to be themſelves ſhining examples of piety and religion, the ſureſt method of rendering their miniſtry ſucceſsful. And becauſe it was impoſſible for him to be always preſent, to teach and warn the children of men, he endeavoured by letters to imprint in their minds the practice of what they had been taught. A method he tells us, he was reſolved to purſue, as long as he continued an inhabitant of this world; *thinking it meet while he was in this tabernacle, to ſtir up, by putting them in mind of theſe things*; that ſo *they might be able after his deceaſe, to have them always in remembrance.*

Saint

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Life of our Saviour.
S.t Paul the
Apostle.

Saint PAUL.

CHAP. I.

The tranſactions of St. Paul from his birth, till his converſion.

ST. Paul was a native of Tarſus, and a deſcendant from the ancient ſtock of Abraham. He was born about two years before the bleſſed Jeſus, and belonged to the tribe of Benjamin, the youngeſt ſon of Jacob, who thus propheſied of him: *Benjamin ſhall ravin as a wolf; in the morning he ſhall devour the prey, and at night he ſhall divide the ſpoil*; a prophetical character which Tertullian and others will have to be accompliſhed in our apoſtle. For, in his youth, or *the morning of his days*, he perſecuted the churches, deſtroying the flock of the Almighty; he *devoured the prey*: in his declining age, or *evening of his days*, he became a phyſician of the nations, feeding and diſtributing with the greateſt care and aſſiduity the ſheep of Chriſt, the great ſhepherd of Iſrael; he *divided the ſpoil*.

Tarſus, the place of this apoſtle's nativity, was the metropolis of Cilicia, and ſituated about three hundred miles diſtant from Jeruſalem; it was exceedingly rich and populous, and a Roman municipium, or free corporation, inveſted with the privileges of Rome by the two firſt emperors, as a reward for the citizens firm adherence to the Cæſars in the rebellion of Craſſus. St. Paul was therefore born a Roman citizen, and he often pleads this privilege on his trials.

It was common for the inhabitants of Tarſus to ſend their children into other cities for learning and improvement; eſpecially to Jeruſalem, where they were ſo numerous, that they had a ſynagogue of their own called the ſynagogue of the Cilicians. To this capital our apoſtle was alſo ſent, and brought up at the feet of that eminent rabbi Gamaliel, in the moſt exact knowledge of the law of Moſes. Nor did he fail to profit by the inſtructions of that great maſter; for he ſo diligently conformed himſelf to its precepts, that without boaſting, he aſſerts of himſelf, that touching the righteouſneſs of the law, he was blameleſs, and defied even his enemies to alledge any thing to the contrary even in his youth. He joined himſelf to the ſect of the Phariſees, the moſt ſtrict order of the Jewiſh religion; but at the ſame time the proudeſt, and the greateſt enemies to Chriſt and his holy religion.

With regard to his double capacity, of Jewiſh extraction and Roman freedom, he had two names,

Saul

Saul and *Paul*, the former Hebrew and the latter Latin. It was common for the deſcendants of Benjamin to give the name Saul to their children ever ſince the time of the firſt king of Iſrael, who was choſen out of that tribe; and Paul was a a name as common among the Romans. We muſt alſo conſider his trade of tent-making as a part of his education, it being the conſtant practice of the Jews, to bring up their children to ſome honeſt calling, that, in caſe of neceſſity, they might provide for themſelves by the labour of their own hands.

Saul having obtained a thorough knowledge of the ſciences cultivated by the Jews, and being naturally of a very hot and fiery temper, became a great champion of the law of Moſes, and the tradition of the elders, which he conſidered as a zeal for God. This rendered him impatient of all oppoſition to the doctrine and tenets he had imbibed, and a vehement blaſphemer of and perſecutor of the chriſtians, who were commonly reputed the enemies and deſtroyers of the Jewiſh oeconomy. We muſt not however conſider our apoſtle as guilty of the pride and hypocriſy of the Phariſees; for he declares, that he had ever been careful to act in conformity to the dictates of his conſcience, by which he thought himſelf bound to do *many things contrary to the name of Jeſus of Nazareth.* It was therefore the prejudices of his education, and the natural warmth of his temper that excited him to thoſe violent perſecutions of the chriſtians, for which he became ſo famous.

The firſt action we find him engaged in, was the diſputation he and his countrymen had with the martyr Stephen, with regard to the Meſſiah. The chriſtian was too hard for them in the diſpute; but they were too powerful for him in their civil intereſts; for being enraged at his convincing arguments, they carried him before the high-prieſt, who by falſe accuſations condemned him to death. How far Saul was concerned in this cruel action is impoſſible to ſay; all we know is, that he *kept the raiment of them that ſlew him.*

The ſtorm of perſecution againſt the church being thus begun, it increaſed prodigiouſly, and the poor chriſtians of Jeruſalem were miſerably harraſſed and diſperſed. In this perſecution our apoſtle was a principal agent, ſearching all the adjacent parts for the afflicted ſaints, beating ſome in the ſynagogue, compelling ſome to blaſpheme, confining ſome in priſon and procuring others to be put to death.

Nor could Jeruſalem and the adjacent parts confine his fiery zeal; he applied to the Sanhedrim, and procured a commiſſion from that court, to extend his perſecution to Damaſcus. How eternally inſatiable is the fury of a miſguided zeal! how reſtleſs and unwearied in its deſigns of cruelty! It had already ſufficiently harraſſed the poor chriſtians at Jeruſalem, but not content with this, it perſecuted them even to ſtrange cities, even to Damaſcus itſelf, whither

ther many of them had fled for ſhelter, reſolving to bring them back to Jeruſalem, in order to their puniſhment and execution.

It may not be improper here to obſerve, that the Jewiſh Sanhedrim had not only the power of ſeizing and ſcourging offenders againſt their law within the bounds of their own country, but, by the connivance and favour of the Romans, might ſend into other countries, where there were any ſynagogues that acknowledged a dependence in religious affairs upon the council of Jeruſalem, to apprehend them; and accordingly Saul was ſent to Damaſcus, to apprehend what chriſtians he could find in that city, and bring them bound to Jeruſalem.

But the Almighty deſigned to employ him in a work of a very different nature, and accordingly ſtopped him in his journey. For as he was travelling between Jeruſalem and Damaſcus, to execute the commiſſion of the Jewiſh Sanhedrim, a refulgent light, far exceeding the brightneſs of the ſun, darted upon him; at which both him and his companions were terribly amazed and confounded, falling, together with their horſes, proſtrate on the ground. Amidſt this confuſion, a voice was heard in the Hebrew language, ſaying, *Saul, Saul, why perſecuteſt thou me?* To which Saul replied, *Who art thou, Lord?* And was immediately anſwered, *I am Jeſus of Nazareth whom thou perſecuteſt: It is hard for thee to kick againſt the pricks.* As if the bleſſed Jeſus had ſaid, *All thy attempts to extirpate the faith in me, will prove abortive, and, like kicking againſt the ſpikes, wound and torment thyſelf.*

Saul was ſufficiently convinced of his folly in acting againſt Jeſus, whom he was now aſſured to be the true Meſſiah, and aſked, *Lord what wilt thou have me to do?* On which the bleſſed Jeſus informed him of the true intention of his appearance, *Ariſe*, ſaid he, *and ſtand upon thy feet, for I have appeared unto thee for this purpoſe, to make thee a miniſter and a witneſs, both of thoſe things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the Gentiles, unto whom now I ſend thee, to open their eyes, and turn them from darkneſs to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; that they may receive forgiveneſs of ſins, and inheritance among them that are ſanctified by faith that is in me.* And for farther inſtruction, the immaculate Jeſus referred him to one of his followers named Ananias, commanding him to repair immediately to the city.

The company which were with him heard the voice, but did not ſee the perſon who ſpake from heaven. In all probability they were ignorant of the Hebrew language, and therefore only heard a confuſed ſound; for the apoſtle himſelf tells us, that *they heard not the voice of him that ſpake*, that is, they did not underſtand what was ſpoken.

The apoſtle now aroſe from the earth; but found himſelf deprived of ſight, the reſplendent brightneſs of the viſion being too intenſe for mortal eyes to behold. His companions

therefore led him by the hand to the city of Damaſcus, where he entered the houſe of Judas, and remained there three days without ſight, nor did he either eat or drink, but ſpent his time in prayer to the Almighty, beſeeching him to pardon the ſins of his paſt life.

In the mean time our bleſſed Saviour appeared in a viſion to Ananias, a very devout and religious man, highly eſteemed by all the inhabitants of Damaſcus, tho' he profeſſed the religion of the crucified Jeſus, commanding him to go into ſuch a ſtreet of the city, and enquire in the houſe of Judas, for *one Saul of Tarſus*, then offering up the moſt fervent prayers to the throne of Grace.

Ananias, who was ever ready to obey the commands of the Moſt High, ſtartled at the name, having heard of his bloody practices at Jeruſalem, and what commiſſion he was now come to execute in Damaſcus. He therefore ſuſpected that his pretended converſion was nothing more than a ſnare artfully laid for the chriſtians. But our bleſſed Saviour ſoon removed his apprehenſions, by telling him that his ſuſpicions were entirely deſtitute of foundation; and that he had now taken him as a choſen veſſel to preach the goſpel both to the Jews and Gentiles, and even before the greateſt monarchs of the earth; acquainting him at the ſame time with the great things he ſhould do and ſuffer for the ſake of the Goſpel, what chains and impriſonments, what rocks and ſcourges, what hunger and thirſt, what ſhipwrecks, and at laſt even death itſelf, he ſhould undergo.

This quieted the fears of Ananias, who immediately obeyed the heavenly viſion, repaired to the houſe of Judas, and laid hands upon Saul, ſaying, "That Jeſus who appeared to thee in the way hath ſent me to reſtore thy ſight, and, by the infuſion of his ſpirit, to give thee the knowledge of thoſe truths which thou haſt blindly and ignorantly perſecuted; but who now is willing to receive thee by baptiſm in his church, and make thee a member of his body." This ſpeech was no ſooner pronounced, than there fell from his eyes thick films reſembling ſcales, and he received his ſight; and after baptiſm converſed freely with the chriſtians of Damaſcus. Nor did he only converſe with them; he alſo, to the great aſtoniſhment of the whole church, preached the Goſpel to thoſe chriſtians he came down with an intention to deſtroy, boldly aſſerting, *that Jeſus was the Chriſt the Son of God*; and proving it to the Jews with ſuch demonſtrative evidence, that they were confounded, and found it impoſſible to anſwer him.

CHAP. II.

The tranſactions of St. Paul from his converſion, till the council held at Jeruſalem.

ST. Paul did not ſtay long at Damaſcus after his converſion; nor did

did he return to Jeruſalem; but being commanded to preach the Goſpel to the Gentiles, he retired into Arabia Petræa, where he received a full revelation of all the myſteries of chriſtianity; for he himſelf declares that he converſed not with fleſh and blood. And having preached in ſeveral parts of that country ſome time, he returned again to Damaſcus, applying himſelf with the utmoſt aſſiduity to the great work of the miniſtry, frequenting the ſynagogues there, powerfully confuting the objections commonly made by the deſcendants of Jacob againſt Jeſus of Nazareth, and converting great numbers of Jews and Gentiles.

He was indeed remarkably zealous in his preaching, and bleſſed with a very extraordinary method of reaſoning, whereby he proved the fundamental points of Chriſtianity beyond exception. This irritated the Jews to the higheſt degree; and at length, after two or three years continuance in thoſe parts, they found means to prevail on the governnor of Damaſcus to have him put to death. But they knew it would be difficult to take him, as he had ſo many friends in the city; they therefore kept themſelves a continual watch, ſearched all the houſes where they ſuppoſed he might conceal himſelf, and alſo obtained a guard from the governor to obſerve the gates, in order to prevent his eſcaping from them.

In this diſtreſs his chriſtian friends were far from deſerting him: they tried every method that offered to procure his eſcape; but finding it impoſſible for him to paſs through either of the gates of the city, they let him down from one of their houſes through a window into a baſket, over the wall, by which means the cruel deſigns of his enemies were rendered abortive.

Having thus eſcaped from his malicious perſecutors, he repaired to Jeruſalem, and on his arrival, addreſſed himſelf to the church. But they knowing well the former temper and principles of this great perſecutor, ſhunned his company, till Barnabas brought him to Peter, who was not yet caſt into priſon, and to James the Lord's brother, biſhop of Jeruſalem, informing them of his miraculous converſion, and that he had preached the Goſpel with the greateſt boldneſs in the ſynagogue of Damaſcus; upon which they gladly received him, and familiarly entertained him fifteen days.

During this interval he was remarkable aſſiduous in preaching the Goſpel of the Son of God, and confuting the Helleniſt Jews with the greateſt courage and reſolution. But ſnares were ſoon laid for him, as malice can as eaſily ceaſe to be, as to remain inactive. And being warned by God in a viſion, that his teſtimony would not be received at Jeruſalem, that therefore it was neceſſary for him to depart and preach the Goſpel to the Gentiles. Accordingly, being conducted by the brethren to Cæſarea Philippi, he ſet ſail for Tarſus, his native city; from whence he was ſoon after brought by Barnabas to Antioch, to aſſiſt him in propagating Chriſtianity in that city. In this employment he ſpent one whole year,

year, and had the pleaſure of ſeeing the Goſpel flouriſh in a very remarkable manner.

In this city it was that the diſciples firſt acquired the name of Chriſtians, for before they were ſtiled Nazarenes; but this appellation ſoon prevailed all over the world, and the former was, in a few ages, almoſt intirely forgotten.

About this time a terrible famine, foretold by Agabus, happened in ſeveral parts of the Roman empire, particularly Judea, which induced the chriſtians at Antioch to compaſſionate the miſeries of their brethren at Jeruſalem; and accordingly raiſed conſiderable contributions for their relief, which they ſent to the capital of Judea by the hands of Barnabas and Saul, who immediately after executing their commiſſion returned to Antioch. But while they were performing the publick exerciſes of religion, it was revealed to them by the Holy Ghoſt, that they ſhould *ſet apart Barnabas and Saul*, to preach the Goſpel in other places; which was accordingly done, and they were immediately deputed for that ſervice by prayer, faſting, and the impoſition of hands.

The firſt place they viſited was Seleucia, where they did not continue long, but ſailed for Cyprus; and at Salamis, a great city in that iſland, they preached in the ſynagogue of the Jews. From hence they removed to Paphos, the reſidence of Sergius Paulus, the proconſul of the iſland, a man of great wiſdom and prudence, but miſerably ſeduced by the wicked artifices of *Bar-Jeſus*, a Jewiſh impoſture, who ſtiled himſelf Elymas, or the magician, vehemently oppoſed the apoſtles, and kept the proconſul from embracing the faith.

The proconſul, however, called for the apoſtles, who, after ſeverely checking Elymas for his malicious oppoſition to the truth, told him the divine vengeance was now ready to ſeize upon him; and immediately he was deprived of his ſight. The vengeance of the Almighty obſerving in this puniſhment a remarkable proportion in depriving him of his bodily eyes, who had ſo wilfully and maliciouſly ſhut thoſe of his mind againſt the light of the Goſpel, and alſo endeavoured to keep others in darkneſs and ignorance. This miracle convinced the proconſul of the truth of the doctrines taught by the apoſtles, and made him a convert to the faith.

St. Paul, after this remarkable ſucceſs in Cyprus, repaired to Phrygia in Pamphilia, and taking Titus with him in the room of Mark, who was gone to Jeruſalem, travelled to Antioch, the metropolis of Piſidia. Soon after their arrival, they entered the ſynagogue of the Jews on the ſabbath day, and after the reading of the law, Paul being invited by the rulers of the ſynagogue, delivered himſelf in the following manner: "Hearken, all ye deſcendants of "Jacob, and ye that fear the Al"mighty to the words of my mouth. "The God of Iſrael made choice of "our fathers, and loved them, when "they had no city of their own to "dwell in, but were ſtrangers and "ſlaves in Egypt, bringing them

" from thence with a mighty hand,
" and a ſtretched-out arm; fed them
" in the wilderneſs forty years, and
" would not ſuffer his anger to
" ariſe againſt them, though they
" often provoked him in the deſert.
" On their arrival in the land he
" promiſed their fathers, he deſ-
" troyed the nations that inhabited
" it, and placed them in that fruit-
" ful country; dividing it to them
" by lot.

" When they were ſettled in the
" land he gave them judges during
" four hundred and fifty years, till
" Samuel the prophet. But on their
" deſiring a king, he placed over
" them Saul the ſon of Cis a Ben-
" jamite, who reigned about forty
" years. And after his death he placed
" David on the throne of Iſrael, giving
" him this teſtimony, *I have found*
" *David the ſon of Jeſſe, a man after*
" *mine own heart, which ſhall fulfil*
" *all my will.* And according to his
" promiſe the Almighty hath raiſed
" up to the ſons of David a Saviour
" Jeſus, *which is Chriſt the Lord.* The
" baptiſm of repentance having been
" preached before his coming by
" John. And as his fore-runner ex-
" ecuted his office, he asked his fol-
" lowers, *whom think ye that I am?*
" You muſt not miſtake me for the
" Meſſiah; he will ſoon follow me:
" but am I not worthy to perform
" the meaneſt office for him?

" To you therefore, ye deſcen-
" dants of Abraham, and all others
" who fear the Almighty, *is this*
" *word of ſalvation ſent.* For the
" inhabitants of Jeruſalem, and ru-
" lers of Iſrael, being ignorant of
" him, and the voices of the pro-
" phets, though read every ſabbath
" in their ſynagogues, fulfilled their
" predictions by condemning the
" immaculate ſon of the Moſt High.
" They found indeed no fault in
" him, though they earneſtly deſired
" Pilate that he might be ſlain.

" When every thing that had
" been written by the prophets con-
" cerning him was fulfilled, they
" took him from the tree, and de-
" poſited his body in the chambers
" of the grave. But death had no
" power to detain him; his Almigh-
" ty Father raiſed him from the
" habitations of the dead. After
" which, he was ſeen during many
" days by his diſciples who attend-
" ed him from Galilee, and are the
" witneſſes choſen by Omnipotence,
" of theſe great and miraculous
" works. And we now declare un-
" ty you glad tidings, namely, That
" the promiſe made by the Almigh-
" ty to our forefathers, he hath per-
" formed to us their children by
" raiſing Jeſus from the dead. The
" prophet David alſo ſaid, *Thou art*
" *my ſon this day have I begotten*
" *thee.* He alſo foretold, that he
" ſhould return from the chambers
" of the duſt, and no more be ſub-
" ject to corruption: *I will give him,*
" ſaid he, *the ſure mercies of David.*
" And again, *Thou ſhalt not ſuffer*
" *thine holy one to ſee corruption.*
" Now this prophecy muſt relate to
" the Meſſiah, for David himſelf,
" after he had ſwayed the ſceptre
" of Iſrael a certain time fell aſleep,
" was depoſited in the chambers of
" the grave, and his fleſh ſaw cor-
" ruption:

" ruption: but the great ſon of Da-
" vid, whom the Almighty raiſed
" from the dead, never ſaw corrup-
" tion.

" Be it therefore known unto you,
" men and brethren, that through
" this Saviour is preached unto you
" the forgiveneſs of ſins. It is by
" his merits we are juſtified from all
" things, which was impoſſible by the
" law of Moſes. Be careful, therefore
" leſt what was foretold by the pro-
" phets come upon you, *Behold ye*
" *deſpiſers, and wonder and periſh: for*
" *I work a work in your days, a work*
" *which you ſhall in no wiſe believe,*
" *though a man declare it unto you.*"

This ſpeech of St. Paul had its deſired effect. The proſelyte Jews deſired it might be repeated the next ſabbath, and the apoſtles perſuaded them to continue firm in the belief of theſe things. The next ſabbath, almoſt the whole city flocked to hear the apoſtles; at which the Jews were filled with envy, and contradicted Paul, uttering many blaſphemous expreſſions againſt the name of Jeſus of Nazareth. But their oppoſition could not daunt the apoſtles, who boldly declared, that our bleſſed Saviour had charged them to preach the Goſpel firſt to the Jews; but as they ſo obſtinately rejected it, they were now to addreſs themſelves to the Gentiles; who, hearing this, rejoiced exceedingly, magnifying the word of the Almighty, and many of them embraced the doctrines of the Goſpel. This increaſed the malice and fury of the Jews, who, by falſe and artful inſinuations, prevailed on ſome of the more devout and honourable women to bring over their husbands to their party; by which means Paul and Barnabas were driven out of the city. At which the apoſtles departed ſhaking off the duſt of their feet, as a teſtimony againſt their ingratitude and infidelity.

From Antioch they went to Iconium, the metropolis of Lycaonia, a province of the leſſer Aſia, where they again entered into the ſynagogue of the Jews, notwithſtanding the ill-treatment they had met with from the Jews in other places; for ſo great was their zeal for the Goſpel, that they were not to be deterred from preaching it by ill uſage, however great. Therefore, according to their uſual method, they again began their preaching in the aſſembly of Iſraelites; and the Almighty ſo far aſſiſted their endeavours, that many, both Jews and proſelytes, believed. Their ſucceſs encouraged them to continue a conſiderable time in this city, to inſtruct the converts, and confirm their faith by miracles. But though they had gained a conſiderable part of the city to the faith, yet many continued in their infidelity: the old leaven of Jewiſh malice began again to ferment, and the unbelieving Jews, having ſtirred up the Gentiles againſt the apoſtles, at laſt prevailed on the multitude to ſtone them. But the apoſtles having timely notice of their deſign, fled from the city and travelled to Lyſtra, where they preached the Goſpel to the inhabitants, and thoſe who dwelt in the adjacent country.

Among the converts at Lyſtra, was a man who had been lame from his

mother's womb, and never had walked. But Paul, perceiving that he had faith to be ſaved, thought proper to add the cure of his body to that of his ſoul, knowing that it would not only be beneficial to him, but to all the reſt of the believers, by confirming their faith. And that the miracle might be wrought in the moſt conſpicuous manner, he, in the midſt of the congregation, ſaid, in an audible voice, to the man, *Stand upright upon thy feet.* And the words were no ſooner pronounced, than his ſtrength was at once reſtored, and he leaped up and walked.

The people who beheld this miracle well knew, that it was not wrought by any human power; but having been initiated into the ſuperſtitious cuſtoms of the heathen, cried out, in the ſpeech of Lycoania, *The Gods are come down to us in the likeneſs of men.* And accordingly they called Barnabas Jupiter, becauſe of his venerable gravity, and Paul Mercury from his eloquence. Nor was it long before the whole city reſounded with acclamations; ſo that almoſt all the inhabitants gathered themſelves together, and preceded by the prieſt of Jupiter, and oxen dreſſed in garlands, they came to the houſe where the apoſtles were, intending to do ſacrifice to them. But as ſoon as Barnabas and Paul underſtood their intentions, they were greatly affected at this ſuperſtitious attempt; and rending their clothes to expreſs their grief and abhorrence of the action, ran to them, crying out, "Ye men of Lyſtra, ye are "miſtaken in the object of your "worſhip; for though we have "done many miracles in the name, "and by the power of Chriſt, yet we "are no more than men, and ſubject "to the ſame paſſions with yourſelves, "and preach unto you the glad "tidings of ſalvation, that ye may "forſake the vanities of this world, "and turn to the living God, who "created the heaven and the earth, "the ſea, and all the creatures they "contain. This omnipotent Being "ſuffered all nations formerly to "walk in their own ways, though "he never left himſelf without wit-"neſs, doing the greateſt good to the "children of men; it is he that "ſendeth rain from heaven, and "crowneth the year with fruitful "ſeaſons, filling our hearts with joy "and gladneſs."

This argument of the apoſtle's had the deſired effect; and the people were at laſt, though with difficulty, perſuaded to lay aſide their intended idolatrous ſacrifice. And ſurely no argument could be more proper to affect the minds of his audience. Is it poſſible to ſurvey the ſeveral parts of the creation, and not diſcover in every place, evident traces of an infinite wiſdom, power, and goodneſs? Who can contemplate the heavens, and not diſcern the wiſdom of Omnipotence, adorning in the moſt beautiful manner thoſe lofty regions? Behold the ſun, how juſtly is that ſource of light and heat, placed in the center of the planetary choir, that each may enjoy its deſtined ſhare of his prolific beams; ſo that the earth is not burnt by a too near approach, nor chilled by the northern blaſts

from too great a receſs; but impregnated with fruits and flowers, by the happy influence of a vital heat, and crowned with luxuriant plenty by the benign influences of the ſeaſons. Who but an infinite Being could launch theſe maſſive globes through the immenſe regions of ſpace, and confine their motions to ther reſpective orbits? Who *poiſes the balancings of the clouds, that divides a watercourſe for the overflowing of waters, and a way for the lightning of the thunder?* Who can *bind the ſweet influences of Pleiades, or looſe the bands of Orion?* Or who can *bring forth Mazaroth in his ſeaſon, or guide Arcturus with his ſons?* Do theſe happen by chance? or by the ſecret appointment of infinite wiſdom? Who can contemplate the wonderful properties of the air, the great treaſury of vital breath, and not reflect on the divine wiſdom that formed it? If we ſurvey the earth, we there diſcover the footſteps of an Almighty Being, who *ſtretcheth the north over the empty ſpace, and hangeth he earth upon nothing*; filling it with a great variety of admirable and uſeful creatures, and maintaining them all by the bounty of his hand. It is he that clothes the graſs with a delightful verdure, that *crowns the year with his loving kindneſs*, and cauſes *the valleys to ſtand thick with corn.* It is he that *maketh the graſs to grow upon the mountains, and herb for the ſervice of man.* He adorns the lilies of the field that neither toil nor ſpin, with a glory that excels the pomp and grandeur of Solomon's court. *He ſhut up the ſea with doors*, and ſaid *Hitherto ſhalt thou come and no farther, and here ſhall thy proud waves be ſtayed.* It is this Almighty Being that arreſts the ſtorm, and ſmooths the tempeſtuous billows of the deep; that delivereth the mariner from all his troubles, and bringeth his ſhip into the deſired haven of ſafety. How reaſonable, therefore, is it that we ſhould worſhip and adore this Omnipotent, this kind Creator, and not transfer the honours due to him alone, to frail mortals, much leſs to dumb idols, the works of men's hands.

The apoſtles having perſuaded the people to deſiſt from the idolatrous worſhip they would have paid them, continued their labours in inſtructing the people, and planting in this city the Goſpel of the Son of God. But the malice of the Jews ſtill purſued them; for ſome of theſe bigotted Iſraelites coming from Antioch and Iconium, exſperated and ſtirred up the multitude; ſo that thoſe very perſons who could hardly be reſtrained from offering ſacrifice to them, now uſed them like ſlaves, ſtoning them in ſo cruel a manner, that Paul was thought to be dead, and as ſuch they dragged him out of the city; but while the chriſtians of Lyſtra were attending on his corpſe, probably in order to carry him to his grave, he aroſe and returned with them into the city; and the next day departed with Barnabas to Derbe, where they preached the Goſpel, and converted many; no danger being able to terrify them from the work

work of the miniſtry, and publiſhing the glad tidings of ſalvation in every place.

They did not, however, long continue at Derbe, but returned to Lyſtra, Iconium, and Antioch of Piſidia, confirming the chriſtians of thoſe places in the faith, earneſtly perſuading them to perſevere, and not be diſcouraged with thoſe troubles and perſecutions which they muſt expect would attend the profeſſion of the Goſpel. And that the affairs of the church might be conducted with more regularity, they ordained elders and paſtors, to teach, to inſtruct, and to watch over them; and then left them to the protection of the Almighty, to whoſe care they recommended them by prayer and faſting.

After leaving Antioch, they paſſed through Piſidia, and came to Pamphylia; and after preaching the Goſpel at Perga, they went down to Attalia. Having thus finiſhed the circuit of their miniſtry, they returned back to Antioch in Syria, from whence they at firſt departed. Here they ſummoned the church, and gave them an account of their miniſtry, the ſucceſs it had met in theſe different parts, and how great a door had thus been opened for the converſion of the Gentile world.

While St. Paul continued at Antioch, that famous controverſy with regard to the obſervation of the Jewiſh ceremonies in the chriſtian diſpenſation was ſet on foot by certain Jewiſh converts, to the great diſturbance of the whole church. And it was determined to ſend Paul and Barnabas to conſult with the apoſtles and church at Jeruſalem, that this affair might be ſettled on the moſt ſolid foundation. On their arrival at Jeruſalem, they firſt addreſſen themſelves to Peter, James, and John, the pillars of that church, by whom they were kindly entertained, and admitted to the *right hand of fellowſhip*. And perceiving by the account given them by St. Paul, that the Goſpel of the uncircumciſion was committed to him, as that of the circumciſion was to Peter, they agreed that Peter ſhould preach to the Jews, and Paul to the Gentiles. This being determined a council was ſummoned, wherein Peter declared his opinion, and Paul and Barnabas acquainted them with the great things God, by their miniſtry, had done among the Gentiles. A plain evidence, that they were accepted by the Almighty, though uncircumciſed, as well as the Jews with all their legal rights and privileges. Accordingly it was unanimouſly determined, that the Gentiles were not under the obligation of the law of Moſes, and therefore, that ſome perſons of their own church ſhould be joined with Paul and Barnabas, to carry the decrees of the council to Antioch, for their fuller ſatisfaction in this matter.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

The tranſactions of St. Paul from the ſynod at Jeruſalem, till his departure from Athens.

ST. Paul and his companions having received the decretal epiſtle returned back to Antioch; and ſoon after Peter himſelf came down. On reading this epiſtle in the church, the converts converſed freely and inoffenſively with the Gentiles, till ſome of the Jews coming thither from Jeruſalem, Peter withdrew his converſation, as if it had been a thing unwarrantable and unlawful. By ſuch a ſtrange method of proceeding the minds of many were diſſatisfied, and their conſciences very uneaſy. St. Paul, with the greateſt concern, obſerved it, and publickly rebuked Peter, with that ſharpneſs and ſeverity his unwarrantable practice deſerved.

Soon after this diſpute, Paul and Barnabas reſolved to viſit the churches they had planted among the Gentiles, and Barnabas was deſirous of taking with them his couſin Mark: but this Paul ſtrenuouſly oppoſed, as he had left them in their former journey. This trifling diſpute aroſe to ſuch a height, that theſe two great apoſtles and fellow-labourers in the Goſpel parted aſunder; Barnabas, taking Mark with him, repaired to Cyprus his native country, and Paul having made choice of Silas, and recommended the ſucceſs of his undertaking to the care of Divine Providence, ſet forward on his intended journey.

They firſt viſited the churches of Syria and Cilicia, confirming them in the faith, by their inſtructions and exhortations. Hence they ſailed to Crete, where Paul preached the Goſpel, and conſtituted Titus to be the firſt biſhop and paſtor of that iſland, leaving him to ſettle thoſe affairs of the church which time would not permit the apoſtle to ſettle himſelf. From hence Paul and Silas returned back into Cilicia, and came to Lyſtra, where they found Timothy, whoſe father was a Greek but his mother a Jewiſh convert, and by her he had been brought up under all the advantages of a pious and religious education, eſpecially with regard to the holy ſcriptures, which he had ſtudied with the greateſt aſſiduity and ſucceſs. This perſon St. Paul deſigned for the companion of his travels, and a ſpecial inſtrument in the miniſtry of the Goſpel. But, knowing that his being uncircumciſed would prove a ſtumbling block to the Jews, cauſed him to be circumciſed; being willing in lawful and indifferent matters to conform himſelf to the tempers and apprehenſions of men, in order to ſave their ſouls.

Every thing being ready for their journey, St. Paul and his companions departed from Lyſtra, paſſing thro' Phrygia and the country of Galatia, where the apoſtle was entertained with the greateſt kindneſs and veneration, the people looking upon him as an angel ſent immediately from

from heaven; and being by revelation forbidden to go into Aſia, he was commanded by a ſecond viſion to repair to Macedonia, to preach the Goſpel. Accordingly, our apoſtle prepared to paſs from Aſia into Europe.

Here St. Luke joined them, and became ever after the inſeparable companion of St. Paul, who, being deſirous of finding the ſpeedieſt paſſage into Macedonia, took ſhip with his companions Silas, Luke, and Timothy, and came to Samothracia, an iſland in the Ægean ſea, not far from Thrace; and the next day to Neapolis, a port of Macedonia. Leaving Neapolis, they repaired to Philippi, the metropolis of that part of Macedonia, and a Roman colony, where they ſtaid ſome days.

In this city, Paul, according to his conſtant practice, preached in a Proſeucha or oratory of the Jews, which ſtood by the river's ſide at ſome diſtance from the city, and was much frequented by the devout women of their religion, who met there to pray and hear the law. To theſe St. Paul preached the glad tidings of the goſpel; and by the influence of the Holy Spirit converted many, eſpecially a certain woman named Lydia, a Jewiſh proſelyte, a ſeller of purple in that city, but a native of Thyatira. This woman, being baptized with her whole family, was ſo importunate with St. Paul and his companions to abide at her houſe, that they were conſtrained to accept of her entertainment.

During the time of the apoſtles reſiding in this city, they continued their daily courſe of worſhipping at the ſame oratory. And after ſeveral days, as they were repairing to the ſame place of devotion, there met them a damſel who had a prophetick ſpirit of divination, by whom her maſters acquired very great advantage. This woman followed Paul and his companions, crying out, *Theſe men are the ſervants of the moſt High God, which ſhew unto us the way to ſalvation.* Paul, at firſt, took no notice of her, not being willing to multiply miracles without neceſſity. But when he ſaw her following them ſeveral days together, he began to be troubled; and in imitation of his great maſter, who would not ſuffer the devil to acknowledge him, leſt his falſe and lying tongue ſhould prejudice the truth in the minds of men, commanded the ſpirit, in the name of Jeſus, to come out of her. The devil with reluctance obeyed, and left the damſel that very inſtant.

This miraculous cure proving a great loſs to her maſters, who acquired large gains from her ſoothſaying, were filled with malice and envy againſt the apoſtles; and by their inſtigation the multitude aroſe, and ſeizing upon Paul and his companions, hurried them before the magiſtrates and governors of the colony; accuſing them of introducing many innovations which were prejudicial to the ſtate, and unlawful for them to comply with, as being Romans. The magiſtrates being concerned for the tranquility of the ſtate, and jealous of all diſturbances, were very forward to puniſh the offenders,

againſt

againſt whom the whole multitude teſtified; and therefore commanded the officers to ſtrip them, and ſcourge them ſeverely as ſeditious perſons.

This was accordingly executed; after which the apoſtles were committed to cloſe cuſtody, the goaler receiving more than ordinary charge to keep them ſafely; and he accordingly thruſt them into the inner priſon, and made their feet faſt in the ſtocks. But the moſt obſcure dungeon, or the pitchy mantle of the night, cannot intercept the beams of divine joy and comfort from the ſouls of ſuch pious men. Their minds were all ſerenity, and at midnight they prayed and ſung praiſes ſo loud, that they were heard in every part of the priſon. Nor were their prayers offered to the throne of grace in vain: an earthquake ſhook the foundations of the priſon, opened the doors, looſed the chains, and ſet the priſoners at liberty. This convulſion of nature rouſed the goaler from his ſleep; and concluding from what he ſaw, that all his priſoners were eſcaped, was going to put a period to his life; but Paul obſerving him, haſtily cried out, *Do thyſelf no harm, for we are all here.* The keeper was now as greatly ſurpriſed at the goodneſs of the apoſtles, as he was before terrified at the thoughts of their eſcape: and calling for a light, he came immediately into the preſence of the apoſtles, fell down at their feet, took them from the dungeon, brought them into his own houſe, waſhed their ſtripes, and begged of them to inſtruct him in the knowledge of that God who was ſo mighty to ſave.

St. Paul readily granted his requeſt, and replied, That, if he believed in Jeſus Chriſt, he might be ſaved, with his whole houſe. Accordingly the goaler, with all his family, were, after a competent inſtruction, baptized, and received as members of the church of Chriſt. How happy a change does the doctrine of the Goſpel make in the minds of men! How does it ſmooth the rougheſt tempers, and inſtil the ſweeteſt principles of civility and good nature into the minds of men! He who, but a few moments before, tyrannized over the apoſtles with the moſt cruel uſage, now treats the them with the greateſt reſpect, and the higheſt marks of kindneſs.

As ſoon as it was day, the magiſtrates, either hearing what had happened, or reflecting on what they had done as too harſh and unjuſtifiable, ſent their ſerjeant to the goaler with orders to diſcharge the apoſtles. The goaler joyfully delivered the meſſage and bid them *depart in peace*; but Paul, that he might make the magiſtrates ſenſible what injury they had done them, and how unjuſtly they had puniſhed them without examination or trial, ſent them word, that, as they had thought proper to ſcourge and impriſon Romans, contrary to the laws of the empire, he expected they ſhould come themſelves, and make them ſome ſatisfaction.

The magiſtrates were terrified at this meſſage; well knowing how dangerous it was to provoke the formidable

midable power of the Romans, who never ſuffered any freeman to be beaten uncondemned; they came therefore to the priſon, and very ſubmiſſively intreated the apoſtles to depart without any farther diſturbance. This ſmall recompence for the cruel uſage they had received was accepted by the meek followers of the bleſſed Jeſus; they left the priſon, and retired to the houſe of Lydia, where they comforted their brethren with an account of their deliverance, and departed; having laid the foundation of a very eminent church, as appears from St. Paul's epiſtle to the Philippians.

Leaving Philippi, Paul and his companions continued their journey towards the weſt, till they came to Theſſalonica, the metropolis of Macedonia, about an hundred and twenty miles from Philippi. On their arrival at Theſſalonica, Paul, according to his cuſtom, went into the ſynagogue of the Jews, and preached unto his countrymen; the ungrateful uſage he had met with in other places, not diſcouraging him from perſevering in ſo glorious a work. His doctrine however was ſtrenuouſly oppoſed by the Jews, who would not allow Jeſus to be the Meſſiah, becauſe of his ignominious death.

During the ſtay of the apoſtles at Theſſalonica, they lodged in the houſe of a certain chriſtian named Jaſon, who entertained them very courteouſly. But the Jews would not ſuffer the apoſtles to continue at reſt. They refuſed to embrace the goſpel themſelves, and therefore envied its ſucceſs, and determined to oppoſe its progreſs. Accordingly, they gathered together a great number of lewd and wicked wretches, who beſet the houſe of Jaſon, intending to take Paul, and deliver him up to an incenſed multitude. But in this they were diſappointed, Paul and Silas being removed from thence by the chriſtians, and concealed in ſome other part of the city. Their fury however was rather exaſperated than leſſened at loſing their prey; and, as they could not find the apoſtles of the bleſſed Jeſus, they determined to be revenged on Jaſon, who had concealed them. Accordingly they ſeized on him with ſome others of the brethren, and carried them before the magiſtrates of the city, accuſing them, as they had before done the apoſtles themſelves at Philippi, of diſturbing the peace of the empire, and ſetting up Jeſus as a king, in derogation of the emperor's dignity and authority. This accuſation induced both people and magiſtrates to be their enemies; and tho' Jaſon was only accuſed of harbouring thoſe innovators, yet the magiſtrates could not be prevailed upon to diſmiſs him and his companions, till they had given ſecurity for their appearance.

As ſoon as the tumult was over, the Theſſalonians, who had been converted by them, ſent away Paul and Silas by night to Beræa, a city about fifty miles ſouth of Theſſalonica, but out of the power of their enemies. Here alſo Paul's great love for his countrymen the Jews, and his earneſt deſire of their ſalvation, excited

cited him to preach to them in particular: accordingly, he entered into their ſynagogue, and explained the goſpel unto them, proving out of the ſcriptures of the old teſtament the truth of the doctrines he advanced. Theſe Jews were of a more ingenuous and candid temper than thoſe of Theſſalonica; and as they heard him with great reverence and attention expound and apply the ſcriptures, ſo they ſearched diligently, whether his proofs were proper and pertinent, and conſonant to the ſenſe of the texts he referred to. And having found every thing to be agreeable to what Paul had advanced, many of them believed; and ſeveral Gentiles, following their example, became obedient to the faith, among whom were ſeveral women of quality. The news of this remarkable ſucceſs was carried to Theſſalonica, and greatly incenſed the inveterate enemies of the goſpel there, who accordingly repaired to Beræa, and raiſed tumults againſt the apoſtles; ſo that Paul, to avoid their fury, was forced to leave the town; but Silas and Timotheus, either leſs known, or leſs envied, continued ſtill there.

Paul leaving Beræa under the conduct of certain guides, it was pretended he deſigned to retire by ſea out of Greece, that his reſtleſs enemies might ceaſe their perſecution; but the guides, according to Paul's order, brought him to Athens, and left him there, after receiving from him an order for Silas and Timotheus to repair to him as ſoon as poſſible.

Athens was at this time the moſt famous academy of all Greece, and abounded with philoſophers illuſtrious for their learning. Among the ſeveral ſects that now flouriſhed at Athens, the Stoics and Epicureans were the moſt remarkable for their oppoſition to Chriſtianity. The Epicureans, becauſe they found their pleaſant and jovial humour, and their looſe and exorbitant courſe of life, ſo greatly checked and controuled by the ſtrict and ſevere precepts of the goſpel, and becauſe the doctrines of it ſo plainly and poſitively aſſerted a Divine Providence governing the world, and at the laſt day will reward or puniſh every man according to his works. The Stoics, on the other hand, tho' pretending to principles of great and uncommon rigour and ſeverity, and ſuch as had the neareſt affinity to the doctrines of the goſpel, yet they found them very different in practice. That meek and humble temper of mind, that modeſty and ſelf-denial, which the goſpel ſo earneſtly recommends, and ſo ſtrictly requires, were directly oppoſite to the immoderate pride and ambition of that ſect, who were not aſhamed to compare their wiſe men even to that of God himſelf.

While St. Paul continued at Athens, expecting the arrival of Silas and Timothy, he walked up and down, to take a more accurate ſurvey of the city, which he found miſerably overrun with ſuperſtition and idolatry. The inhabitants were remarkably religious and devout: they had a great number of gods, whom they adored: falſe, indeed, they were, but ſuch

as they, being deſtitute of revelation, accounted true: and ſo very careful were they, that no deity ſhould want due honour from them, that they had an altar inſcribed, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. A great variety of reaſons are given for this inſcription: ſome affirm that it was the name which the Pagans generally gave to the God of the Jews; but others think that it included all the gods of Aſia, Europe, and Africa, beſides the unknown God.

Theſe ſuperſtitious practices grieved the ſpirit of the apoſtle; he lamented to ſee ſo much zeal and devotion miſplaced, and flattered himſelf if he could but direct it to its proper object, it would be of eminent ſervices to the church of Chriſt. Accordingly, he exerted all his ſtrength for their converſion; diſputing on the ſabbath-days in the ſynagogues of the Jews; and at other times took all opportunities of preaching to the Athenians the coming of the Meſſiah to ſave the world.

This doctrine was equally new and ſtrange to the Athenians; and tho' they did not perſecute him as the Jews did, yet his preaching Jeſus was conſidered by the Epicurean and Stoic philoſophers, as a fabulous legend; and by the more ſober part as a diſcovery of ſome new gods, which they had not yet placed in their temples. And though they were not unwilling to receive any new deities, yet as the Areopagus, the ſupreme court of the city, was to judge of all gods, to whom public worſhip might be allowed, they brought him before thoſe judges, to give an account of his doctrine.

Paul being placed before the judges of this high aſſembly, readily gave them an account of his doctrine, in a grave and elegant ſpeech. Wherein he did not tell them they were horrible and groſs idolators, leſt he ſhould offend them, and thereby prevent them from liſtening to his reaſons; but, having commended them for their religious diſpoſitions, he took occaſion from the altar inſcribed to the *unknown God*, to make a proper defence of his doctrine. "I endeavour, ſaid he, only to explain "that altar to you, and manifeſt the "nature of that God whom ye ignorantly worſhip; which is the "God that made the world, and all "things therein; and who being "Lord of all, dwells not in temples "made with hands, nor is to be "worſhipped in lifeleſs idols. As "he is the Creator of all things, he "cannot be confined to the workmanſhip of man, whether temples, "or ſtatues; nor ſtands in need of ſacrifices, ſince he is the fountain of "life to all things. He made from "one common original the whole "race of mankind, and hath wiſely "determined their dependance on "him, that they might be obliged "to ſeek after him and ſerve him. "A truth perceivable in the darkeſt ſtate of ignorance, and acknowleged by one of your own poets. "If this be the nature of God, it is "ſurely the higheſt abſurdity to re-"preſent him by any image or ſimi-"litude. The divine patience hath

" been too much exerciſed already " with ſuch groſs abuſes in religion; " but now expects a thorough re- " formation; having ſent his ſon " *Jeſus Chriſt* to make him known " to the world, and at the ſame " time to inform them that he hath " appointed a day of general judg- " ment, when the religion of man- " kind ſhall be tried by the teſt of " the Goſpel, before his only be- " gotten Son, who is appointed ſole " judge of quick and dead, and " whoſe commiſſion to that high " office hath been ratified by the " Almighty in raiſing him from the " dead."

On his mentioning the reſurrection, ſome of the philoſophers mocked and derided him; others, more modeſt, but not ſatisfied with the proofs he had given, gravely anſwered, *We would hear thee again of this matter.* After which Paul departed from the court; but not without ſome ſucceſs, for a few of his auditors believed and attended his inſtructions; among whom were Dionyſius one of the judges, and Damaris, thought by ſome to have been his wife. And it is generally believed that Dionyſius was afterwards conſtituted by St. Paul the firſt biſhop of Athens.

CHAP. IV.

The tranſactions of St. Paul at Corinth and Epheſus.

DURING St. Paul's ſtay at Athens, Timothy, according to the order he had received, came to him out of Macedonia; and brought an account that the chriſtians at Theſſalonica were under perſecution from their fellow-citizens ever ſince his departure: at which St. Paul was greatly concerned, and at firſt inclined to viſit them in perſon to confirm them in the faith they had embraced; but being hindered by the enemies to the goſpel, he ſent Timothy to comfort them, and put them in mind of what they had at firſt heard, namely, that perſecution would be the conſtant attendant on their profeſſion.

On Timothy's departure, St. Paul left Athens, and travelled to Corinth, a very populous place, and famous for its trade. Here he found Aquila and Priſcilla his wife, lately come from Italy, having been baniſhed from Rome by the decree of Claudius. And they being of the ſame trade he himſelf had learned in his youth, he wrought with them, that he might not be burdenſome to the new converts.

After ſome ſtay in Corinth, the apoſtle was joined by Silas and Timothy, and diſputed frequently in the ſynagogue, reaſoning and proving, that Jeſus was the true Meſſiah. This exaſperated the Jews to the greateſt degree, and what they could not conquer by argument and force of reaſon, they endeavoured to carry by noiſe and clamour, blended with blaſphemies and revilings; the laſt refuge of an impotent and baffled cauſe. But St. Paul, to teſtify his reſentment, ſhook his garments, and told them, that ſince they were determined to pull down the vengeance of

of heaven upon their own heads, he was abſolutely guiltleſs and innocent, and would henceforth addreſs himſelf to the Gentiles. Accordingly he left them, and repaired to the houſe of Juſtus, a religious proſelyte, where, by his preaching and miracles, he converted great numbers to the faith. Among which were Criſpus the chief ruler of the ſynagogue, Garus, and Stephanus, who with their families were baptized, and admitted members of the chriſtian church.

But the conſtant returns of malice and ingratitude are ſufficient to tire the largeſt charity, and cool the moſt generous reſolution: our dear Redeemer, therefore, that the apoſtle might not be diſcouraged by the reſtleſs attempts and machinations of his enemies, appeared to him in a viſion, and told him, that notwithſtanding the bad ſucceſs he had hitherto met with, there was a large harveſt to be gathered in that place; that he ſhould not be afraid of his enemies, but preach the Goſpel boldly and ſecurely, for that he himſelf would protect and preſerve him.

About this time he ſeems to have wrote his firſt Epiſtle to the Theſſalonians, Silas and Timothy being lately returned from thence, and delivered the meſſage for which he had ſent them thither. The principal deſign of this Epiſtle is to confirm them in the belief of the chriſtian religion, and excite them to perſevere in it, notwithſtanding all the malice of their enemies, and the perſecutions they muſt expect to ſuffer, and to inſtruct them in the duties of a religious life.

While the apoſtle was thus employed, the malice of the Jews was plotting his deſtruction: but being for ſome time diſappointed, their malice changed into fury, and they hurried the apoſtle before the tribunal of Gallio, elder brother to the famous Seneca, and proconſul of the province, accuſing him of being an innovator in religion; and of endeavouring to introduce a method of worſhipping God contrary to the law. Paul was ready to have made his defence; but Gallio prevented him by telling his accuſers, that if he had been guilty of any injuſtice he would have heard their complaint and redreſſed their grievance; but as it was nothing but a controverſy about words and names, he would have nothing to do with it. But the Jews continuing their clamours, he commanded his officers to drive them from the tribunal; which was according done, and ſome of the townſmen ſeized upon Soſthenes one of the rulers of the ſynagogue, and beat him before the judgment-ſeat, the proconſul giving himſelf no concern about it. Thus were the deſigns of the apoſtle's enemies rendered abortive; and Paul continued, without any farther oppoſition, to preach the doctrine of the Goſpel during a year and a half, when he left the church at Corinth, to viſit others he had planted in different parts of Aſia.

During the apoſtle's ſtay at Corinth, he wrote his ſecond Epiſtle to the Theſſalonians, to ſupply his abſence. In this Epiſtle he again endeavours

to confirm their minds in the truth of the Goſpel, and prevent their being ſhaken with thoſe troubles which the wicked and unbelieving Jews would be continually raiſing againſt them. And becauſe ſome paſſages in his former Epiſtle relating to the deſtruction of the Jews had been miſunderſtood, as if the day of the Lord was near at hand, he rectifies theſe miſtakes, and ſhews the ſigns that muſt precede our Lord's coming to judgment.

St. Paul, on his leaving the church at Corinth, took ſhip at Cenchrea, the port of Corinth, for Syria, taking with him Aquila and Priſcilla; and on his arrival at Epheſus, he preached a while in the ſynagogue of the Jews, promiſing to return to them, after keeping the paſſover at Jeruſalem. Accordingly, he again took ſhip, and landed at Cæſarea, and from thence travelled to Jeruſalem, where he kept the feaſt, viſited the church, and then repaired to Antioch. Here he ſtayed ſome time, and then traverſed the countries of Galatia and Phrygia, confirming the new converted chriſtians, till he came to Epheſus.

During the time he ſpent in this large circuit, providence took care of the churches of Epheſus and Corinth by means of one Apollos, an eloquent Jew of Alexandria, and well acquainted with the law and writings of the prophets. This man coming to Epheſus, though he was only inſtructed in the rudiments of Chriſtianity, and John's baptiſm; yet he taught with great courage, and a moſt powerful zeal. After being fully inſtructed in the faith by Aquila and Priſcilla, he paſſed over into Acaia, being furniſhed with recommendatory letters by the churches of Epheſus and Corinth. He was of the greateſt ſervice in Acaia, in watering what Paul had planted, confirming the diſciples, and powerfully convincing the Jews that Jeſus was the true Meſſiah promiſed in the ſcriptures.

While Apollos was thus employed St. Paul returned to Epheſus, where he fixed his abode for three years, bringing with him Gaius of Derbe, Ariſtarchus a native of Theſſalonica, Timotheus and Eraſtus of Corinth, and Titus. The firſt thing he did after his arrival was to examine certain diſciples, *Whether they had received the Holy Ghoſt ſince they believed?* To which they anſwered, "That "the doctrine they had received, "promiſed nothing of that nature; "nor had they ever heard, that ſuch "an extraordinary ſpirit had of late "been beſtowed upon the church." This anſwer ſurpriſed the apoſtle, who asked them in what name they had been baptized? Since, in the chriſtian form, the name of the Holy Ghoſt was always expreſſed. They replied, that they had only received John's baptiſm; which, though it obliged men to repent, yet mentioned nothing expreſsly concerning the Holy Ghoſt, or his gifts or powers. Upon which the apoſtle informed them, that though John's baptiſm commanded nothing but repentance, yet it tacitly implied the whole doctrine of Chriſt and the Holy Ghoſt. When they heard this they were baptized according to the form preſcribed

ed by Chriſt himſelf, that is, in the name of the bleſſed Trinity; and after the apoſtle had prayed and laid his hands upon them, they received the gifts of tongues, and other miraculous powers then common in the church.

After this, he entered into the Jewiſh ſynagogues, where for the firſt three months, he contended and diſputed with the Jews, endeavouring with great earneſtneſs and reſolution to convince them of the truth of the Chriſtian religion. But when inſtead of ſucceſs he met with nothing but obſtinacy and infidelity, he left the ſynagogue, and taking thoſe with him whom he had converted, inſtructed them and others who reſorted to him, in the ſchool of one Tyrannus, a place where ſcholars uſed to be inſtructed. In this manner he continued to preach the goſpel two whole years; by which means the Jews and proſelytes of the whole proconſular Aſia had an opportunity of hearing the glad tidings of ſalvation. And becauſe miracles are the cleareſt evidence of a divine commiſſion, the Almighty was pleaſed to rectify the doctrine which St. Paul delivered by amazing and miraculous operations, many of which were of a peculiar and extraordinary nature; for he did not only heal thoſe that came to him, but if napkins or handkerchiefs were only touched by him, and applied to the ſick, their diſeaſes immediately vaniſhed, and the evil ſpirits departed out of thoſe that were poſſeſſed by them.

About this time the apoſtle wrote his Epiſtle to the Galatians; for he had heard that ſince his departure, corrupt opinions had crept in among them, with regard to the neceſſity of obſerving the legal rites; and that ſeveral impoſtors had found admittance into that church, who knew no better method of undermining the doctrine he had planted there, than by villifying his perſon, ſlighting him as an apoſtle only at ſecond hand, not to be compared with Peter, James, and John, who had familiarly converſed with Chriſt in the days of his fleſh, and been immediately deputed by him. In this Epiſtle, therefore, he reproves them with ſome neceſſary ſeverity, for their being ſo ſoon led out of the right way, wherein he had placed them, and ſo eaſily ſuffered themſelves to be impoſed upon by the crafty artifices of ſeducers. He vindicates the honour of his apoſtleſhip, and the immediate receiving his commiſſion from Chriſt, wherein he ſhews that he was not inferior to the very beſt of the apoſtles. He largely refutes thoſe Judaical opinions that had tainted and infected them; and in the concluſion inſtructs them in the rules and duties of a holy life.

During St. Paul's ſtay at Epheſus, an accident happened which was attended with great trouble and danger. In this city was the celebrated temple of Diana, a ſtructure ſo magnificent for beauty, riches, and magnitude, that it was reckoned one of the ſeven wonders of the world. But what

what increaſed its fame and reputation was an image of Diana kept there, which the idolatrous prieſts perſuaded the people was made by Jupiter himſelf, and dropt down from heaven; for which reaſon it was held in great veneration, not only at Epheſus, but throughout all Aſia. So that people procured ſilver ſhrines or figures of this temple of ſuch a ſize as to carry in their pockets, either for curioſity, or to ſtir up their devotion. This proved the ſource of a great deal of buſineſs to the ſilverſmiths of Epheſus: of whom one Demetrius was the chief. This man plainly perceiving, that Chriſtianity tended to the ſubverſion of idolatry, and conſequently to the ruin of their gainful employment, called all the artiſts together, and pathetically repreſented to them, "How "inevitably they muſt be reduced "to a ſtate of poverty, if they ſuf-"fered Paul to bring their temple "and goddeſs into contempt, by per-"ſuading people, as he did, that "they were were no gods which "were made with hands."

This ſpeech of Demetrius fired them with a zeal which they could no longer contain; ſo that they cried out with one voice, *Great is Diana of the Epheſians.* They ſhould indeed have conſidered that if their goddeſs was able to defend herſelf againſt the doctrines preached by Paul, neither ſhe nor the temple were in any danger; whereas if Paul was able to deſtroy their gods, it was in vain for them to reſiſt him. But intereſt and ſuperſtition meeting in the minds of a bigotted multitude, admitted of no reaſon. They were all fired with a zeal for their goddeſs, and determined, if they could find Paul, to expoſe him to the beaſts in the theatre. The whole city was filled with the tumult; and the crowd miſſing Paul, laid hold on Gaius and Ariſtarchus, two Macedonians of Paul's company, and hurried them into the theatre, with a deſign to throw them to the wild beaſts. Paul, who was at preſent in a place of ſecurity, hearing of the danger to which his brethren were expoſed, was very deſirous of venturing after them, in order to ſpeak in their behalf; but was at laſt diſſuaded from it not only by the chriſtians, but alſo by the Gentile governors of the theatrical games, who were his friends, and aſſured him that he would only endanger himſelf without reſcuing his friends.

The noiſe and confuſion of the multitude was now prodigious, moſt of them not knowing the reaſon for which they were come together; and therefore ſome cried one thing, and ſome another. In this diſtraction Alexander, a Jewiſh convert, was ſingled out by the multitude, and by the inſtigation of the Jews was going to make his defence, in which, doubtleſs he would have laid the whole blame upon Paul. But the multitude perceiving him to be a Jew, and therefore ſuſpecting he was one of Paul's aſſociates, raiſed another outcry for near two hours together, wherein nothing could be heard but *Great is Diana of the Epheſians.* This confuſion brought the town-clerk, who kept the regiſter

er of the games, into the theatre, to ſuppreſs, if poſſible, ſo uncommon a tumult. And having, with great difficulty, obtained ſilence, calmly and diſcreetly told them, "That the world was ſufficiently "acquainted with the devotion paid "by the Epheſians to the great god-"deſs Diana, and the image which "fell down from Jupiter; and there-"fore it was abſolutely needleſs for "them to publiſh it at that time. "That if Demetrius and his fraternity "had any thing to alledge againſt "Paul and his companions, the "courts were open, and they might "bring their accuſation againſt "them. Or, if they were queſti-"oned with regard to the breach of "any of their laws, the cauſe ought "to be heard in a regular aſſembly. "That they would do well to con-"ſider this, and be quiet; having "already rendered themſelves ob-"noxious to the diſpleaſure of the "magiſtrates, if they ſhould think "proper to call them to an account "for that day's tumult."

This diſcourſe had the deſired effect; the multitude were covinced that they had acted very improperly, and therefore repaired to their reſpective habitations; and Gaius, Ariſtarchus, and Alexander were releaſed without any hurt. But the eſcape of Paul was ſo very remarkable, that he mentions it as a miraculous deliverance. *We had*, ſays he, *the ſentence of death in ourſelves, that we ſhould not truſt in ourſelves, but in God who raiſeth the dead, who delivered us from ſo great a death.* And in another place he tells us, *he fought with beaſts at Epheſus*; alluding, either to the deſign of the enraged multitude of throwing him to the wild beaſts in the theatre, tho' their intention was not executed, or to the manners of the people, who ſufficiently deſerved the character of being ſavage and brutal in the higheſt degree.

About this time, Paul was informed of ſome diſturbances in the church of Corinth, hatched and fomented by a company of falſe teachers, crept in among them, who endeavoured to draw them into parties and factions, by perſuading one company to be for Peter, another for Paul, and a third for Apollos; as if the principal part of religion conſiſted in being of this or that denomination, or in a warm active zeal to depreciate and oppoſe whoever is not of our own narrow ſect. It is a very weak and ſlender claim, when a man holds his religion by no better title than his having joined himſelf to ſuch or ſuch a ſect or congregation, and is remarkably zealous to promote it; to be childiſhly and paſſionately clamorous for ſome perſon's particular mode of adminiſtration, or ſome particular opinion; as if religion rather conſiſted in curious diſputes, or in ſeparating from our brethren, than *in righteouſneſs, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghoſt.* By theſe means, ſchiſms and factions broke into the Corinthian church; whereby many wild and extravagant opinions, and ſome of them ſuch as tended to undermine the fundamental articles of Chriſtianity, were planted and had taken root there.

there. To cure theſe diſtempers St. Paul wrote his firſt Epiſtle to the Corinthians; wherein he ſmartly reproves them for their ſchiſms and parties, conjures them to peace, and unity, corrects thoſe groſs corruptions that had been introduced among them, and particularly reſolves thoſe many caſes and controverſies, wherein they had requeſted his advice and council.

Soon after Apollos, determining to go to Crete together with Zenos, St. Paul ſent by them his Epiſtle to Titus, whom he had made biſhop of that iſland, and had left there for propagating the Goſpel. In this Epiſtle he inſtructs him fully in the execution of his office, how to behave himſelf, and what directions he ſhould give to others, in the ſeveral relations and ranks of men, eſpecially thoſe who were to be advanced to places of office and authority in the church.

CHAP. V.

The tranſactions of St. Paul from his departure from Epheſus, till his being arraigned before Felix.

NOT long after the tumult at Athens, Paul called the chriſtians together, and took his leave of them with the moſt tender expreſſions of love and affection. He had now ſpent almoſt three years at Epheſus, and founded there a very conſiderable church, of which he had ordained Timothy the firſt biſhop. He firſt travelled about two hundred miles northward to Troas, before he took ſhip, expecting to meet Titus there. But miſſing him he purſued his voyage to Macedonia.

On his arrival in Macedonia, he preached the Goſpel in ſeveral places, even as far as Illyricum, now called Sclavonia. During this journey he met with many troubles and dangers, *without were fightings, and within were fears.* But God, who comforteth thoſe that are caſt down, revived his ſpirits by the arrival of Titus, who gave him a pleaſing account of the good effects his epiſtle had produced at Corinth. This worthy biſhop came thither with large contributions from the church at Corinth; and from the example of thoſe liberal chriſtians, St. Paul ſtirred up the Macedonians to imitate their charity, intended to aſſiſt the poor chriſtians at Jeruſalem.

During the ſtay of Titus in Macedonia, Paul wrote his ſecond Epiſtle to the Corinthians, and ſent it to them by Titus and Luke. In this Epiſtle, he endeavours to rectify what his former Epiſtle had not effected, to vindicate his apoſtleſhip from that contempt and ſcorn, and himſelf from thoſe ſlanders and aſperſions which the ſeducers, who found themſelves laſhed by his former letter, had caſt upon him; together with ſeveral other particular caſes relating to the church.

Aout this time alſo, he wrote his firſt Epiſtle to Timothy, whom he had left at Epheſus, wherein he gives him large directions how to carry himſelf in the diſcharge of that great office and authority in the church, com-

committed to his care: inſtructs him in the particular qualifications of thoſe he ſhould make choice of as biſhops and miniſters in the church. He likewiſe gives him inſtructions with regard to his giving orders to deaconeſſes, and inſtructing ſervants; warning him at the ſame time againſt that peſtilent generation of hereticks and ſeducers that would ariſe in the church.

During his ſtay in Greece, he went to Corinth, where he wrote his famous Epiſtle to the Romans, which he ſent by Phœbe, a deaconeſs of the church of Cenchrea, near Corinth. His principal intention in this Epiſtle is fully to ſtate and determine the great controverſy between the Jews and Gentiles, with regard to the obligations of the rights and ceremonies of the Jewiſh law, and thoſe principal and material points of doctrine depending upon it, namely, chriſtian liberty, the uſe of indifferent things, and the like. And, which is the chief intention of all religion, inſtructs them, and preſſes them to perform the duties of a holy and pious life, ſuch as the chriſtian doctrine naturally recommends.

St. Paul being now determined to return into Syria, in order to convey the contributions to the brethren at Jeruſalem, ſet out on his journey; but being informed that the Jews had formed a deſign of killing and robbing him by the way, he returned back into Macedonia, and came to Philippi, from whence he went to Troas, where he ſtayed ſeven days. Here he preached to them on the Lord's day, and continued his diſcourſe till midnight, being himſelf to depart in the morning. The length of his diſcourſe and time of the night cauſed ſome of his audience to be overtaken with ſleep, and among them a young man named Eutychus, who fell from the third ſtory, and was taken up dead; but the apoſtle, by his prayer to the throne of grace, preſently reſtored him to life and health. How indefatigable was the induſtry of this great apoſtle! How cloſely did he tread in the ſteps of his great Maſter who *went about doing good*. He preached, and wrought miracles wherever he came! As a maſter-builder, he either laid a foundation, or raiſed the ſuperſtructure! He was *inſtant in ſeaſon and out of ſeaſon*, and ſpared no pains to aſſiſt the ſouls of men!

The night being thus ſpent in holy exerciſes, St. Paul took his leave of the brethren in the morning, travelling on foot to Aſſos, a ſea-port town, whither he had before ſent his companions by ſea. From thence they ſailed to Mytilene, a city in the iſle of Lesbos. The next day they ſailed from thence, and came over-againſt Chios, and the day following landed at Trogyllium, a promontary of Ionia, near Samos. The next day they came to Miletus, not putting in at Epheſus, becauſe the apoſtle was reſolved, if poſſible, to be at Jeruſalem the day of Pentecoſt.

On his arrival at Miletus he ſent to Epheſus, to ſummon the elders of the church, and on their coming, reminded them of the manner in which

which he had converſed among them; how faithfully and affectionately he had diſcharged the offices of his miniſtry, and how inceſſantly he had laboured for the good of the ſouls of men: adding, that he had never failed to acquaint them both in publick and private, with whatever might be uſeful and profitable to them; urging both the Jews and Gentiles to repentance, and reformation of life, and a hearty entertainment of the faith of Chriſt: that now he was going up to Jeruſalem, where he was ignorant of what might befal him, except what had been foretold him by thoſe who were endued with the prophetical gifts of the Holy Ghoſt; namely, that afflictions and impriſonment would attend him. But that this gave him no concern, being willing to lay down his life whenever the Goſpel required it, and fully determined to ſerve faithfully his great Lord and Maſter. "I "well know, continued he, that "ye will ſee my face no more; but "for my encouragement and ſatisfaction, ye yourſelves can bear me "witneſs, that I have not, by con"cealing any part of the chriſtian "doctrine, betrayed your ſouls. And "as for yourſelves, whom God hath "made biſhops and paſtors of his "church, you ſhould be careful to "feed, guide, and direct thoſe chri"ſtians under your inſpection, and "be infinitely tender of the wel"fare of ſouls, for whoſe redemp"tion the bleſſed Jeſus laid down "his own life. All the care there"fore poſſible for you to uſe is no "more than neceſſary; for after my "departure, heretical teachers will "appear in the church, to the great "danger of the ſouls of men, ſeek"ing by every crafty method, and "pernicious doctrine to gain proſe"lytes to their party, and by that "means fill the church of Chriſt with "ſchiſms and factions. Watch, ye "therefore, and remember with "what tears and ſorrow, I have "during three years warned you "of theſe things. And now I re"commend you to the divine fa"vour and protection, and to the "rules and inſtructions of the goſ"pel, which, if adhered to, will "undoubtedly diſpoſe and perfect "you for that ſtate of happineſs "which the Almighty hath pre"pared for good men in the man"ſions of eternity. You well know "that I have from the beginning "dealt faithfully and uprightly with "you; that I have had no covetous "deſigns, or ever deſired the riches "of other men; nay, I have la"boured with mine own hands, to "ſupport me and my companions; "you ought therefore to ſupport the "weak, and relieve the poor, ra"ther than be yourſelves charge"able to others, according to that "incomparable ſaying of the great "Redeemer of mankind, *It is* "*more bleſſed to give than to re*"*ceive.*"

St. Paul having finiſhed his diſcourſe, he kneeled down and joined with them in prayer; when they all melted into tears, and, with the greateſt expreſſions of ſorrow, attended him to the ſhip; grieving in the moſt paſſionate manner for

what he had told them, *That they ſhould ſee his face no more.*

Paul, with his companions, now departed from Myletus, and arrived at Coos, from whence they ſailed the next day to Rhodes, two iſlands in the Ægean ſea. From thence they came to Patara, the metropolis of Lycia, where they went on board another veſſel bound for Tyre in Phænicia. On his arrival, he viſited the brethren there, and continued with them a week, and was adviſed by ſome of them, who had the gift of prophecy, not to go up to Jeruſalem. But the apoſtle would by no means abandon his deſign, or refuſe to ſuffer any thing provided he might ſpread the Goſpel of his Saviour. Finding all perſuaſions were in vain, they all accompanied him to the ſhore, where he kneeled down and prayed with them; and after embracing them with the utmoſt affection, he went on board, and came to Ptolemais, and the next day to Ceſarea. Here Paul and his companions lodged in the houſe of Philip the Evangeliſt, one of the ſeven deacons ſet apart by the apoſtles, and who had before converted the Samaritans. Philip had four daughters all virgins, who had the gift of prophecy.

During their ſtay in this place, Agabus, a chriſtian prophet, came thither from Judea, who taking Paul's girdle, bound his own hands and feet with it; ſignifying by this eternal ſymbol, that the Jews would bind Paul in that manner, and deliver him to the Gentiles. Whereupon, both his own companions and the chriſtians of Ceſarea, earneſtly beſought him, that he would not go up to Jeruſalem. But the apoſtle aſked them, if they intended by theſe paſſionate diſſuaſives to add more affliction to his ſorrow? "For I am "ready, continued he, not only to "be bound, but alſo to die at Je-"ruſalem, for the name of the "Lord Jeſus." When the diſciples found that his reſolution was not to be ſhaken, they importuned him no farther, leaving the event to be determined according to the pleaſure of the Moſt High. And all things being ready, Paul and his companions ſet forwards on their journey, and were kindly and joyfully received by the chriſtians, on their arrival at Jeruſalem.

The next day after their arrival, Paul and his companions went to the houſe of St. James the apoſtle, where the reſt of the biſhops and governors of the church were met together. After mutual ſalutations, the apoſtle gave them a particular account of the ſucceſs with which God had bleſſed his endeavours in propagating chriſtianity among the Gentiles; for which they all joined in thankſgiving to God; but withal told him that he was now come to a place, where there many thouſands of Jewiſh converts, who were all zealous for the law of Moſes, and who had been informed, that he taught the Jews whom he had converted, to renounce circumciſion, and the ceremonies of the law. That as ſoon as the multitude heard of his arrival, they would all aſſemble to ſee how he behaved himſelf in this matter: and therefore, to

prevent diſturbance, they thought it adviſeable for him to join himſelf with four perſons, who were at that time to accompliſh a vow, and perform the uſual rites and ceremonies with them, and provide ſuch ſacrifices for them, as the law, in that caſe, required; and that as a ſymbol of their diſcharging their vow, they might ſhave their heads; whereby it would appear, that the reports that were ſpread concerning him were falſe and groundleſs, and that he himſelf ſtill obſerved the rites and orders of the Moſaical inſtitutions. But, with regard to the Gentile converts, they required no ſuch obſervances at their hands, nor expected any thing more from them in theſe indifferent matters, than what had been before determined in the ſynod formerly held at Jeruſalem. St. Paul, who in ſuch caſes was willing *to become all things to all men that he might gain the more*, conſented to their counſel; and taking the perſons with him to the temple, told the prieſts that the time of a vow they had made being now expired, and having purified themſelves according as the nature of their caſe required, they were come to make the offerings required by law.

The ſeven days in which thoſe ſacrifices were to be offered, being now almoſt ended, certain Jews from Aſia, finding him in the temple, began to raiſe a tumult, and laying hold on Paul, called to their brethren the Jews to aſſiſt them, declaring that this was the perſon, who every where preached doctrines derogatory to the Jewiſh nation, and deſtructive to the inſtitutions of the law, and the purity of that ſacred place, which he had now defiled, by bringing Greeks into the temple; poſitively concluding, that becauſe they had ſeen Trophimus a Gentile convert with him in the city, that he had alſo brought him into the temple: ſo apt is malice to make any ſuppoſition in order to draw from thence its own concluſion. This accuſation, tho' abſolutely falſe, ſet the whole city in an uproar, and ſeizing on the apoſtle, they dragged him out of the temple, when the doors were immediately ſhut, to prevent his returning into that holy place. Nor had they failed of ſoon putting a period to all his ſufferings and troubles, had not Claudius Lyſias, commander of the Roman garriſon in the caſtle of Antonia, arrived with a band of ſoldiers to his reſcue; and ſuppoſing, from the great tumult of the Jews, that he was a more than ordinary malefactor, loaded him with a double chain, tho' he was as yet altogether ignorant, either of his country, or the crime he was accuſed of; it being impoſſible to obtain any ſatisfactory anſwer from the multitude, who called for nothing but his death, following the ſoldiers in ſuch a riotous manner, that they were forced to carry the apoſtle in their arms, to ſecure him from the rage and violence of the people.

As they were going in this manner towards the caſtle, Paul aſked the governor, whether he might have the liberty of ſpeaking to him, who finding he underſtood the Greek language,

language, enquired of him whether he was not that Egyptian, who, a few years before, had raiſed a ſedition in Judea, and headed a party of four thouſand vile and profligate wretches. To which the apoſtle replied, that he was a Jew of Tarſus, a free-man of a rich and honourable city; and therefore begged of him, that he might have leave to ſpeak unto the people. This the Roman officer readily granted, and Paul, ſtanding near the door of the caſtle, made ſigns that they ſhould hold their peace, and began to addreſs them in the Hebrew language; which engaged them to liſten with more attention to the following diſcourſe:

" Liſten, ye deſcendants of Ja-
" cob, to a perſon of your own re-
" ligion, and like yourſelves a child
" of Abraham; born in Tarſus, and
" brought up in this city, at the feet
" of Gamaliel, and fully inſtructed
" in the law delivered by Moſes to
" our forefathers, and formerly as
" zealous for the temple worſhip
" as ye are at preſent.

" Nay, I perſecuted unto death
" all who believed in Jeſus, ſeizing
" on all I could find both men and
" women, and caſt them into priſon.

" This the high-prieſt, and all
" our elders well know; for from
" them I received a commiſſion,
" and repaired to Damaſcus, to
" bring from thence to Jeruſalem
" all the chriſtians in order to their
" undergoing an exemplary puniſh-
" ment.

" But as I was purſuing my jour-
" ney, to execute this commiſſion,
" and was arrived near Damaſcus,
" there appeared, about mid-day, a
" light from heaven, ſhining round
" about me.

" Terrified at ſo aweful an ap-
" pearance, I fell to the ground,
" and heard a voice ſaying unto me,
" *Saul, Saul, why perſecuteſt thou me?*

" To which I anſwered, *Who*
" *art thou, Lord?* And the voice
" replied, *I am Jeſus of Nazareth*
" *whom thou perſecuteſt.*

" During this interval, my com-
" panions were greatly terrified at
" the exceeding light that ſurround-
" ed me; but they did not under-
" ſtand the words that were ſpoken
" from on high.

" After recovering from the ter-
" ror with which my mind was
" filled, on ſeeing Jeſus ſo highly
" advanced above all earthly power,
" I anſwered, *What ſhall I do Lord?*
" And he replied, *Ariſe, and go in-*
" *to Damaſcus, and there it ſhall be*
" *told thee of all things which are ap-*
" *pointed for thee to do.*

" The brilliance of the glory de-
" prived me of ſight; ſo that my
" companions led me by the hand
" to Damaſcus, where one Ana-
" nias, a perſon well reſpected by
" all the Jews of that city, viſited
" me, and ſaid, *Brother-Saul, re-*
" *ceive thy ſight.* And in a moment
" my eyes were opened, and I ſaw
" him ſtanding before me.

" When he ſaw that my ſight
" was reſtored, he ſaid to me, The
" Almighty God of Abraham, Iſaac,
" and Jacob, hath appointed thee
" to know his will, to ſee the great
" Meſſiah, the Holy One of God,

" and hear the voice of his mouth; " for thou art choſen to be a wit- " neſs to all the nations of the earth " of thoſe ſurpriſing things thou haſt " ſeen and heard. Why therefore " tarrieſt thou here any longer? " *Ariſe and be baptized, and waſh* " *away thy ſins, calling on the name* " *of the Lord.*"

" After this glorious viſion, and " miraculous power of the Moſt " High, when I was returned from " Damaſcus to Jeruſalem, and of- " fering up my prayers in the tem- " ple, I fell into a trance, and again " ſaw the great Son of David, who " ſaid unto me, Depart quickly from " Jeruſalem; for the ſons of Jacob " will refuſe to believe thy teſti- " mony concerning me. And I " anſwered, Lord, they know how " cruelly I uſed thy ſaints and fol- " lowers; that I impriſoned and " beat them in every city, and in " every ſynagogue, Nay, when " they ſhed the blood of thy holy " martyr Stephen, I was alſo one " of the ſpectators; I conſented to " his death; I even kept the rai- " ment of thoſe that ſlew him.

" But he replied, Depart: I will " ſend thee to countries far remote; " even to the Gentiles."

The Jews had till now liſtened with ſome attention to his ſpeech; but, on his mentioning the commiſſion he had received to preach the goſpel to the Gentiles, their fury knew no bounds; crying out, with one voice, " *Away with ſuch a fellow* " *from the earth:* he is unworthy to " be ranked among the race of mor- " tals, or even to breathe the vital air." And as they thought words too weak to expreſs their fury, they threw off their clothes, and filled the air with duſt, indicating their great deſire of ſtoning him.

But the captain of the guard commanded him to be brought within the caſtle, and that he ſhould be examined by ſcourging, till he confeſſed the reaſon of the uncommon rage ſhewn againſt him by the people. Accordingly, the lictor bound him, and was going to put the orders he had received in execution, when Paul aſked the centurion that ſtood by, whether it was lawful to ſcourge a citizen of Rome, before any ſentence had been paſſed upon him? The centurion, inſtead of anſwering the queſtion, repaired immediately to the governor; deſiring him to take care how he proceeded againſt the priſoner, becauſe he was a Roman. On this information, the governor himſelf came into the priſon, and aſked Paul, whether he was really a free citizen of Rome? And being told he was, he anſwered, that he himſelf procured that great privilege by a large ſum of money: but Paul anſwered, *I was free born.* On receiving this account, the governor commanded the centurion not to ſcourge him, being terrified at what he had already done, his chaining a free denizon of Rome.

The next day he ordered his chains to be taken off; and that he might thoroughly ſatisfy himſelf of the cauſe of ſo unuſual a tumult the preceding day, ſummoned the Sanhedrim to meet, and brought down Paul before them.

The

The apoſtle being thus placed before the great council of the Jews, told them, that in all the paſſages of his life, he had taken care to govern his actions by the ſevereſt rules of duty and conſcience. *Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conſcience before God until this day.* How great is the ſecurity of a truly good man! How ſtrong, though inviſible a ſupport does innocence become in the greateſt danger! With how generous a confidence does virtue and honeſty guard the breaſt of a true profeſſor of chriſtianity! Nothing elſe indeed can lay a ſolid foundation for ſatisfaction and tranquility when any calamities overtake us; religion and a good conſcience fill the breaſt with a heavenly ſerenity, which all the little accidents of this world, can neither ruffle nor diſcompoſe. And accordingly Seneca compares the mind of a wiſe and good man to the ſtate of the upper region, which is always calm and ſerene.

But however this expreſſion of St. Paul might tend to ſhew the true ſtate of his mind; the high-prieſt Ananias was ſo offended at it, that he commanded thoſe who ſtood next to him to ſtrike him in the face; at which the apoſtle ſmartly replied, "*God ſhall ſmite thee, thou whited wall:* "thou art placed on the ſeat of judg- "ment to determine according to "to the law, and commandeſt me "to be ſmitten in direct oppoſition "to its precepts." On which ſome ſome of the ſpectators replied, "It "is not lawful to revile the high- "prieſt of the Almighty." And Paul anſwered, "I did not know "that Ananias was appointed by God "to be an high-prieſt. But as he is "inveſted with authority, it is unjuſt "to revile him, God himſelf hav- "ing commanded, that *no man ſhould "ſpeak evil of the ruler of the people.*" And perceiving that the council conſiſted partly of Sadducees and partly of Phariſees, he cried aloud "*Men "and brethren, I am a Phariſee, the ſon "of a Phariſee*, and am now brought "before this tribunal for aſſerting "the reſurrection from the dead."

This declaration threw the whole court into confuſion; the Phariſees, being zealous patrons of that article, declared the priſoner innocent, and that in all probability he had received ſome intimation from heaven by an angel, or the ſilent whiſpers of the Holy Spirit; and if ſo, they in reality fought againſt Omnipotence himſelf, by oppoſing his doctrine. While the Sadducees, who denied the reſurrection, together with the exiſtence of either angel or ſpirit, ſtrenuouſly inſiſted that the apoſtle was a turbulent perſon, and ought to be puniſhed.

The council being thus divided, their diſſentions increaſed to that degree, that the captain feared Paul would have been pulled in pieces; and therefore, took him from the bar and carried him back to the caſtle. But during the ſilence of the night, the great Redeemer of mankind, to comfort his faithful ſervant under all the terrors he had ſuffered the two preceding days, appeared to him in a viſion, encouraging him to conſtancy and reſolution, aſſuring him, that as he had born witneſs of him

at Jeruſalem, he ſhould, notwithſtanding all the malice and wicked deſigns of his enemies, live to bear his teſtimony even in Rome itſelf.

The next morning the Jews, whoſe envy and malice were increaſed by theſe dilatory proceedings, determined to uſe a quicker method of putting a period to his life. In order to this above forty of the moſt turbulent entered into a ſhocking confederacy of killing him; ratifying it by an oath, and the moſt bitter execration that they would neither eat nor drink till they had put their inhuman deſign in execution. But ſuch vile monſters would do well to remember, that a Being from whoſe eye nothing can be concealed, and whoſe power nothing can reſiſt, is privy to all their actions, often renders their deſigns abortive, and will ſurely puniſh them for their baſe attempts. Accordingly this deſign, tho' probably concluded under the pitchy mantle of the night, was diſcovered to St. Paul, by his ſiſter's ſon, and at the requeſt of the apoſtle told to the governor himſelf, who immediately commanded two parties of horſe and foot, to be ready by nine o'clock that night, in order to conduct St. Paul to Felix, the Roman governor of that province; to whom alſo he ſent an account of the whole proceedings of the Jews againſt the priſoner; and at the ſame time ordered his accuſers alſo to appear before the Roman magiſtrate. Accordingly, St. Paul was conducted to Antipatris, and afterwards to Ceſarea, where the letters being delivered to Felix, the apoſtle was alſo preſented to him; and finding that he belonged to the province of Cilicia, he told him that as ſoon as his accuſers were cóme down, he would determine the affair, and in the mean time commanded him to be ſecured in the place called Herod's hall.

CHAP. VI.

The tranſactions of St. Paul from his firſt trial before Felix, till his coming to Rome.

A Few days after St. Paul's arrival, Ananias the high-prieſt, with ſome others of the ſanhedrim, came to Ceſarea, accompanied by Tertullus their advocate, who in a ſhort, but eloquent ſpeech, adorned with all the flattering and inſinuating arts of oratory, began to accuſe the apoſtle, charging him with ſedition, hereſy, and the profanation of the temple: That they would have ſaved him the trouble of this hearing, by judging him according to their own law, had not Lyſias, the chief captain, violently taken him from them, and ſent both the priſoner and them to Cæſarea.

The orator having finiſhed his charge againſt the apoſtle, Felix told St. Paul, that he was now at liberty to make his defence. Accordingly he diſtinctly anſwered every part of the charge in the following manner:

"I anſwer this charge of the "Jews with greater ſatisfaction be"fore thee, becauſe thou haſt for "many years been a judge of this "nation. About twelve days ſince,

I repaired

"I repaired to Jeruſalem, to worſhip "the God of Jacob. But I neither "diſputed with any man, or endea- "voured to ſtir up the people in the "ſynagogues or the city. Nor can "they prove the charge they have "brought againſt me.

"This however, I readily confeſs "*that after the way which they call he-* "*reſy, ſo worſhip I the God of my fa-* "*thers*; firmly believing every part "of the writings of Moſes and the "prophets: and at the ſame time "believe, as they themſelves alſo "do, that the Almighty will raiſe "at the laſt day, both the juſt and "unjuſt from the dead. And ac- "cording to this faith, I am careful "to maintain a clear and quiet con- "ſcience both towards God and "man.

"After I had ſpent ſome years in "diſtant countries, I repaired to Je- "ruſalem, with the alms I had collect- "ed in other provinces, for the poor of "mine own nation, and offerings to "the God of Jacob. And while I was "performing the duties of religion, "certain Aſiatic Jews found me in "the temple, purified according to "the law; but neither attended with "a multitude of followers, or the "leaſt tumultuous aſſembly. It was "therefore neceſſary that theſe Jews "ſhould have been here if they had "any thing to alledge againſt me. "Nay, I appeal to thoſe of the "Sanhedrim here preſent, if any "thing has been laid to my charge, "except the objections of the Sad- "ducees, who violently oppoſed me "for aſſerting the doctrine of the "reſurrection."

Felix having thus heard both parties, refuſed to paſs any final ſentence, till he had more fully adviſed about it, and conſulted Lyſias the governor of the caſtle, who was the moſt proper perſon to give an account of the ſedition and tumult; commanding, in the mean time that St. Paul ſhould be kept under a guard, but at the ſame time enjoy the liberty of being viſited by his friends, and receive from them any office of friendſhip and kindneſs.

Soon after this, Felix's wife Druſilla, a Jeweſs, and daughter of the elder Herod, came down to him at Ceſarea, in whoſe preſence the governor ſent for Paul, and gave him leave to explain the doctrines of chriſtianity. In this diſcourſe, the apoſtle took occaſion particularly to inſiſt upon the great obligation which the laws of Chriſt lay upon men to juſtice and righteouſneſs, to ſobriety and chaſtity; urging, at the ſame time the ſevere and impartial account that muſt be given at the judgment of the great day, when all men ſhall be arraigned before the awful tribunal of Omnipotence, for the actions of their paſt life, and be eternally puniſhed or rewarded according to their works.

This diſcourſe was wiſely adapted to the ſtate and temper of Felix. But corroſives are very uneaſy to a guilty mind. Men naturally hate whatever *brings their ſins to remembrance*, and ſharpens the ſting of a violated conſcience. But however diſagreeable theſe truths may be, they cannot be heard without confuſion; and accordingly, when St.

Paul pathetically deſcribed the terrors of the laſt judgment, Felix trembled on his throne; and was ſo greatly affected, that he cauſed the apoſtle to break off abruptly, telling him that he would hear the remainder of his diſcourſe at a more convenient ſeaſon.

And certainly Felix had ſufficient reaſon to tremble, and his conſcience to be ſenſibly alarmed at theſe reflections; for he was a man notoriouſly infamous for rapine and violence. Tacitus tells us, that he made his will the law of his government, practiſing all manner of cruelty and injuſtice. His incontinence, luxury, and debauchery, was remarkable; nor did he ſcruple to violate all the laws of God and man, to ſatisfy his unruly paſſions. To theſe qualities he added bribery and covetouſneſs; and therefore often ſent for our apoſtle to diſcourſe with him, expecting he would have given him a conſiderable ſum for his releaſe; having, in all probability, heard that St. Paul had brought a large quantity of money to Jeruſalem. But finding no offers were made him either by the apoſtle himſelf or his friends, he kept him priſoner two years; when he himſelf being diſcharged from his office by Nero, he left Paul in priſon, in order to gratify the malice of the Jews, and engage them to ſpeak the better of his government, after his departure from Judea.

Felix was ſucceeded in the government of the province by Portius Feſtus, before whom at his firſt coming to Jeruſalem, the high-prieſt and Sanhedrim prefered an indictment againſt Paul, deſiring that he might be ſent for up to Jeruſalem, in order to his trial, intending to aſſaſſinate him by the way. But Feſtus told them, that he was ſhortly going himſelf to Ceſarea; and that if they had any complaint againſt Paul, they ſhould come down thither, and accuſe him. Accordingly, as ſoon as he was come to Ceſarea, he aſcended the tribunal, where the Jews renewed the charge they had before brought againſt Paul; but the apoſtle ſoon cleared himſelf of every part of the charge, they not being able to prove any thing againſt him. Feſtus, however, being willing to procure the favour of the Jews at his entrance on the government, asked him whether he would go up and be tried before him at Jeruſalem? But the apoſtle well knowing the conſequences of ſuch a propoſal, anſwered, "I am a Roman, "and therefore ought to be judged "by the Roman law; and now ſtand "before the judgment-ſeat of Cæſar. "I have done nothing againſt the "Jews, a fact thou thyſelf very "well knoweſt to be true. If I "have committed any thing that "deſerves death, I am ready to die; "but if not, no perſon hath a power "to deliver me into the hands of "mine enemies. *I appeal unto "Cæſar.*"

This method of appealing was common among the Romans, and introduced to defend and ſecure the lives and fortunes of the populous from the unjuſt encroachments, and over-rigorous ſeveries of the magiſtrates, where-

whereby it was lawful in caſes of oppreſſion to appeal to the people for redreſs; a thing more than once ſettled by the ſanction of the Valerian law.

Some time after St. Paul had appealed unto Cæſar, king Agrippa, who ſucceeded Herod in the Tetrarchate of Galilee, and his ſiſter Bernice, came to Ceſarea to viſit the new governor. Feſtus embraced this opportunity of mentioning the caſe of our apoſtle to king Agrippa, together with the remarkable tumult this affair had occaſioned among the Jews, and the appeal he had made to Cæſar. This account excited the curioſity of king Agrippa; and he was deſirous of hearing himſelf what St. Paul had to ſay in his own vindication. Accordingly, the next day the king and his ſiſter, accompanied with Feſtus the governor, and ſeveral other perſons of diſtinction, came into the court with a pompous and ſplendid retinue, where the priſoner was brought before them. On his appearing, Feſtus informed the court how greatly he had been importuned by the Jews, both at Ceſarea and Jeruſalem, to put the priſoner to death as a malefactor; but having on examination found him guilty of no capital crime, and the priſoner himſelf having appealed unto Cæſar, he was determined to ſend him to Rome; but was willing to have his cauſe debated before Agrippa, that he might be furniſhed with ſome material particulars to ſend with him; it being highly abſurd to ſend a priſoner without ſignifying the crimes alledged againſt him.

Feſtus having finiſhed his ſpeech, Agrippa told Paul, he was now at liberty to make his own defence: and ſilence being made, he deliver d himſelf in the following manner, addreſſing his ſpeech particularly to Agrippa.

"I conſider it as a peculiar happineſs, king Agrippa, that I am to "make my defence againſt the accuſations of the Jews, before thee; "becauſe thou art well acquainted "with all their cuſtoms, and the "queſtions commonly debated a-"mong them: I therefore beſeech "thee to hear me patiently.

"All the Jews are well acquainted "with my manner of life from "my youth, the greateſt part of it "having been ſpent with mine own "countrymen at Jeruſalem. They "alſo know that I was educated un-"der the inſtitutions of the Phariſees, the ſtricteſt ſect of our religion, and am now arraigned for "a tenet believed by all their fathers; "a tenet ſufficiently credible in itſelf, "and plainly revealed in the ſcriptures, I mean, the reſurrection of "the dead. Why ſhould any mortal think it either incredible or im-"poſſible, that God ſhould raiſe the "dead?

"I indeed thought myſelf indiſpenſibly obliged to oppoſe the "religion of Jeſus of Nazareth. "Nor was I ſatisfied with im-"priſoning and puniſhing with "death itſelf, the ſaints I found at "Jeruſalem; I even perſecuted them "in ſtrange cities, whither my im-"placable zeal purſued them, hav-"ing procured authority for that

" purpoſe from the chief prieſts and " elders.

" Accordingly, I departed for Da- " maſcus, with a commiſſion from " the Sanhedrim; but as I was tra- " velling towards that city, I ſaw at " mid-day, O king, a light from " heaven, far exceeding the bright- " neſs of the ſun, encompaſſing me " and my companions. On ſeeing " this aweful appearance, we all " fell to the earth; and I heard a " voice, which ſaid to me, in the " Hebrew language, *Saul, Saul,* " *why perſecuteſt thou me? It is* " *hard for thee to kick againſt the* " *pricks?* To which I anſwered, *Who* " *art thou, Lord?* And he replied, " *I am Jeſus whom thou perſecuteſt.* " But be not terrified, ariſe from " the earth: for I have appeared " unto thee, that thou mighteſt be " both a witneſs of the things thou " haſt ſeen, and alſo of others which " I will hereafter reveal unto thee. " My power ſhall deliver thee from " the Jews and Gentiles, to whom " now I ſend thee to preach the " Goſpel; to withdraw the veil of " darkneſs and ignorance; to turn " them from falſhood unto truth, " *and from the power of Satan unto* " *God.*

" Accordingly, King Agrippa, I " readily obeyed the heavenly viſion; " I preached the Goſpel firſt to the " inhabitants of Damaſcus, then to " thoſe of Jeruſalem, and Judea, " and afterwards to the Gentiles; " perſuading them to forſake their " iniquities, and, by ſincere repent- " ance, turn to the living God.

" Theſe endeavours to ſave the " ſouls of ſinful mortals, exaſpe- " rated the Jews, who caught me " in the temple, and entered into a " conſpiracy to deſtroy me. But, " by the help of Omnipotence, I " ſtill remain a witneſs to all the " human race, preaching nothing " but what Moſes and all the pro- " phets foretold; namely, That the " Meſſiah ſhould ſuffer, be the firſt " that ſhould riſe from the cham- " bers of the grave, and publiſh the " glad tidings of ſalvation, both to " the Jews and Gentiles."

While the apoſtle thus pleaded for himſelf, Feſtus cried out, " Paul, " thou art mad; too much ſtudy " hath deprived thee of thy reaſon." But Paul anſwered, " I am far, " moſt noble Feſtus, from being " tranſported with idle and diſtract- " ed ideas; the words I ſpeak are " dictated by truth and ſobriety. " And I am perſuaded that king " Agrippa himſelf is not ignorant " of theſe things; for they were " tranſacted openly before the world. " I am confident, King Agrippa, " that thou believeſt the prophets; " and therefore muſt know that all " their predictions were fulfilled in " Chriſt." To which Agrippa an- ſwered, " Thou haſt almoſt per- " ſuaded me to embrace the Chriſ- " tian faith," And Paul replied, " I ſincerely wiſh, that not only " thou, but alſo all that hear me, " were not almoſt, but altogether " the ſame as I myſelf, except be- " ing priſoners."

When Paul had thus ſpoken, the king and the governor, with the reſt of

of the council, withdrew to confer privately together; and finding by the accuſations brought againſt him, that he was not guilty by the Roman law of any capital offence, nor even of ſuch as deſerved impriſonment, Agrippa told Feſtus, that he might have been ſet at liberty if he had not appealed unto Cæſar; but an appeal being once made, the judge had no longer any power either to abſolve or condemn, the cauſe being entirely reſerved to the cognizance of that ſuperior, to whom the priſoner had appealed.

It being now finally determined that Paul ſhould be ſent to Rome, he was, with ſeveral other priſoners of conſequence, committed to the care of Julius, commander of a company belonging to the legion of Auguſtus; and was accompanied in this voyage by St. Luke, Ariſtarchus, Trophimus, and ſome others not mentioned by the ſacred hiſtorian.

In September 56, or, according to others, 57, they embarked on board a ſhip of Adramyttium, and ſailed to Sidon, where the centurion courteouſly gave the apoſtle leave to go on ſhore to viſit his friends, and refreſh himſelf. After a ſhort ſtay they ſailed for Cyprus, and arrived oppoſite the Fair-Havens, a place near Myra a city of Lycia. Here the ſeaſon being far advanced, and Paul foreſeeing it would be a dangerous voyage, perſuaded them to put in and winter there. But the Roman centurion preferring the opinion of the maſter of the ſhip, and the harbour being at the ſame time incommodious, reſolved, if poſſible, to reach Phœnice, a port of Crete, and winter there. But they ſoon found themſelves diſappointed; for the fine ſoutherly gale, which had favoured them for ſome time, ſuddenly changed into a ſtormy and tempeſtuous wind at north-eaſt, which blew with ſuch violence that the ſhip was obliged to ſail before it; and to prevent her foundering, they threw over-board the principal part of her loading.

In this deſperate and uncomfortable condition, they continued fourteen days, neither ſun nor ſtar appearing for great part of the time. During this confuſion the apoſtle put them in mind how prepoſterouſly they had acted in not liſtening to his advice; but at the ſame time told them that the God whom he ſerved and worſhipped, had the laſt night ſent an angel to him, with aſſurance, that, notwithſtanding their preſent danger, not one of their lives ſhould be loſt, though the ſhip ſhould be wrecked on a certain iſland.

On the fourteenth night, the ſailors upon ſounding, found they were near ſome coaſt; and therefore, to avoid the rocks thought proper to come to an anchor, till the morning might give them better information. In the mean time the ſeamen, who beſt underſtood the danger, were preparing to get into the boat to ſave themſelves: which Paul perceiving, told the captain, that unleſs they all ſtayed in the ſhip, not one of them could be ſaved: whereupon the ſoldiers cut the ropes, and let the boat fall overboard into the ſea.

During the time they continued at anchor waiting for the light of the morning, St. Paul prevailed upon them to eat and refreſh themſelves, having faſted a long time, aſſuring them they ſhould all eſcape. When they had finiſhed their repaſt they lightened the ſhip of thoſe goods which ſtill remained on board, and endeavoured to put into a ſmall creek they had diſcovered at a little diſtance. But falling into a place where two ſeas met, the ſhip ran a-ground, the fore-part remaining immoveable, but the after-part was demoliſhed by the waves. Awakened with the danger they were in, the ſoldiers were deſirous of killing the priſoners, leſt any of them ſhould make their eſcape; but the centurion, willing to ſave Paul, refuſed his conſent, commanding that every one ſhould ſhift for himſelf in the beſt method he could. Accordingly, ſome by ſwimming, and others by broken pieces of the ſhip, they all to the number of two hundred threeſcore and ſixteen got ſafe on ſhore.

The country on which they were caſt, was, as St. Paul had foretold, an iſland called Melita, now Malta, ſituated in the Libyan ſea, between Syracuſe and Africa. Here they met with great civility from a barbarous people, and the plain acknowledgments of a divine juſtice written on the naked and uninſtructed minds of men. They treated them with great humanity, entertaining them with all the neceſſary accommodations; but while St. Paul was laying a few ſticks on the fire, a viper, enlivened by the heat, came from among the wood and faſtened on his hand. On ſeeing this, the inhabitants of the iſland concluded, that he was certainly ſome notorious murderer, whom the divine vengeance, tho' it ſuffered him to eſcape the ſea, had reſerved for a more publick and ſolemn execution. But when they ſaw him ſhake off the venomous creature into the fire, and no manner of harm enſue, they changed their ſentiments, and cried out, *that he was a God:* ſo eaſily are light and credulous minds tranſported from one extreme to another.

Not far from the place where they were ſhipwrecked was the reſidence of Publius the governor of the iſland, who entertained this unfortunate company with great hoſpitality for three days; in acknowledgment of which St. Paul by his prayers, and the impoſition of his hands, recovered his father from a fever and a bloody-flux; and reſtored ſeveral others of the inhabitants, afflicted with different diſeaſes, to their former health and ſtrength; in conſequence of which they not only ſhewed him the greateſt marks of their eſteem, but furniſhed both him and his company with all the neceſſaries proper for the reſt of their voyage.

After three months ſtay in this iſland, the centurion with his charge went on board the Caſtor and Pollux, a ſhip of Alexandria, bound to Italy. They put in at Syracuſe, where they tarried three days; ſailed thence to Regium, and ſo to Puteoli, where they landed; and finding ſome chriſtians there

there, ſtaid at their requeſt a week with them, and then ſet forward on their journey to Rome. The chriſtians of this city, hearing of the apoſtle's coming, went to meet him as far as the Three-Taverns, about thirty miles from Rome, and others as far as the Apii-forum, fifty one miles diſtant from the capital. They kindly embraced each other, and the liberty he ſaw the chriſtians enjoyed at Rome, greatly tended to enliven the ſpirits of the apoſtle. By theſe chriſtians he was conducted in a kind of triumph into the city, where, at their arrival, the reſt of the priſoners were delivered to the captain of the guard, and by him diſpoſed in the common priſon; but St. Paul, probably by the interceſſion of Julius, was permitted to reſide in a private houſe, with only a ſoldier for his ward.

CHAP. VII.

The tranſactions of St. Paul, from his arrival at Rome till his martyrdom.

THREE days after St. Paul arrived at Rome, he ſent for the heads of the Jewiſh conſiſtory there, and related to them the cauſe of his coming, in the following manner: "Tho' I have been guilty of "no violence of the laws of our re- "ligion, yet I was delivered by the "Jews at Jeruſalem to the Roman "governors, who more than once "would have acquitted me as inno- "cent of any capital offence; but, "by the perverſeneſs of my perſe- "cutors, I was obliged to appeal "unto Cæſar; not that I had any "thing to accuſe my nation of: I "had recourſe to this method "merely to clear my own inno- "cence."

Having thus removed a popular prejudice, he added, "That the true cauſe of his ſufferings was what their own religion had taught him, *the belief and expectation of a future reſurrection.*" This ſpeech gained greatly on their affections, and they anſwered, That they had received no advice concerning him, nor had any of the Jews that came from Judea brought any charge againſt him: but at the ſame time they deſired to know, what he had to ſay in ſupport of the religion he had embraced, it being every where decried both by Jew and Gentile. Accordingly, upon a day appointed, he diſcourſed with them from morning to night concerning the religion and doctrine of the holy Jeſus; proving, from the promiſes and predictions of the Old Teſtament, that he was the true Meſſiah. But his diſcourſe had different effects on different hearers, ſome being convinced, and others perſiſting in their infidelity: and as they were departing in ſome diſcontent at each other, the apoſtle told them, it was too plain that God had accompliſhed upon them the prophetical curſe, of being left to their own wilful hardineſs and impenitency, to be blind at noon-day, and to run themſelves headlong into irrecoverable ruin. That ſince this was the caſe, they muſt expect, that he would henceforth preach to the Gentiles,

Gentiles, who would very readily embrace what they ſo ſcornfully reject-d, the glad tidings of the goſpel.

For two whole years Paul dwelt at Rome, in a houſe he had hired for his own uſe; wherein he conſtantly employed himſelf in preaching and writing for the good of the church. He preached daily without interruption, and with remarkable ſucceſs; ſo that his impriſonment contributed greatly to the propagation of the Goſpel, and rendered him famous even in the emperor's court, where he converted ſeveral to Chriſtianity.

Among others of the apoſtle's converts at Rome was one Oneſimus, who had formerly been a ſervant to Philemon, a perſon of diſtinction in Coloſſe, but had run away from his maſter, and taken with him ſome things of value. Having rambled as far as Rome, he was now converted by St. Paul, and by him returned to his maſter, with a ſhort recommendatory letter, "earneſtly "deſiring him to pardon him; and, "notwithſtanding his former faults, "to treat him kindly, and uſe him "as a brother, promiſing withal, "that if he had wronged or owed "him any thing, he himſelf would "repay it."

This epiſtle may be conſidered as a maſterpiece of eloquence in the perſuaſive way; for the apoſtle has herein had recourſe to all the conſiderations, which friendſhip, religion, piety, and tenderneſs can inſpire, to reconcile a maſter to his ſervant; and yet ſome of the ancients were of opinion, that it did not deſerve a place in the canon of ſcripture, becauſe it was wrote on a particular occaſion, and with a deſign not ſo much to inſtruct chriſtians in general, as to recommend a poor fugitive ſervant. But tho' the ſubject of this Epiſtle be a private affair, yet it contains, among others, the following general inſtructions: 1. That no chriſtian, though of the meaneſt condition, is to be contemned. 2. That chriſtianity does not impair the power of maſters over their ſervants. 3. That ſervants ought to make ſatisfaction for any wrong or injury done to their maſters. 4. That maſters ought to be reconciled to their ſervants, upon their repentance and acknowledgement of their faults. And 5. That there is, at all times, a love and affection due from a maſter to a profitable ſervant. Who therefore would refuſe to number an Epiſtle, ſo profitable, and ſo inſtructive, with the reſt of St. Paul's works!

The chriſtians of Philippi hearing of St. Paul's impriſonment at Rome, and not knowing what ſtreights he might be reduced to, raiſed a contribution for him, and ſent it by Ephroditus their biſhop, by whom he returned an Epiſtle to them, wherein he gives ſome account of the ſtate of his affairs at Rome; gratefully acknowledges their kindneſs to him; warns them againſt the dangerous opinions which the Judaizing teachers began to vent among them; and adviſes them to live in continual obedience to Chriſt; to avoid diſputations, delight in prayer, be courageous under affliction,

tion, united in love and cloathed with humility, in imitation of the bleſſed Jeſus, who ſo far humbled himſelf, as to *b come obedient unto death, even the death of the croſs.*

St. Paul had lived three years at Epheſus, preaching the goſpel to the numerous inhabitants of that city, and was therefore well acquainted with the ſtate and condition of the place; ſo that taking the opportunity of Tychicus's going thither, he wrote his Epiſtle to the Epheſians, wherein he endeavours to countermine the principles and practices both of the Jews and Gentiles; to confirm them in the belief and practice of the chriſtian doctrine; and to inſtruct them fully in the great myſteries of the goſpel; their redemption and juſtification by the death of Chriſt; their gratuitous election; their union with the Jews in one body, of which Chriſt is the head and the glorious exaltation of that head above all creatures both ſpiritual and temporal; together with many excellent moral precepts, both as to the general duties of religion, and the duties of their particular relations.

St. Paul himſelf had never been at Coloſſe: but Epaphras, who was then at Rome, a priſoner with him, had preached the goſpel there with good ſucceſs; and from him he might learn, that certain falſe teachers had endeavoured to perſuade the people, that they ought not to apply to God by Jeſus Chriſt, who ſince his aſcenſion, was ſo far exalted above them, that angels were now become the proper mediators between God and man; and therefore in oppoſition to this, as well as other ſeductions of the ſame nature, he wrote his Epiſtle to the Coloſſians; wherein he magnificently diſplays the Meſſiah, and all the benefits flowing from him, as being the image of his father, the Redeemer of all mankind, the reconciler of all things to God, and the head of the church, which gives life and vigour to all its members: he commends the doctrine preached to them by Epaphras, and exhorts them not to be led away by the reaſonings of human philoſophy, by the ſuperſtitious practices of making differences of meats and drinks, or by a pretended humility in worſhipping angels; and gives them an abſtract of many principal duties of the chriſtian life, eſpecially ſuch as reſpect the relations between husbands and wives, parents and children, maſters and ſervants.

By what means St. Paul was delivered from his impriſonment, and diſcharged from the accuſation the Jews brought againſt him, we have no account in hiſtory; but it is natural to ſuppoſe, that not having ſufficient proof of what they alledged, or being informed that the crimes they accuſed him of, were no violations of the Roman law, they durſt not implead him before the emperor, and ſo permitted him to be diſcharged of courſe. But by whatever means he procured his liberty, he wrote his Epiſtle to the Hebrews before he left Italy, from whence he dates his ſalutations.

The principal deſign of it is to magnify Chriſt and the religion of the goſpel, above Moſes and the Jewiſh œconomy, in order to eſtabliſh and confirm the converted Jews in the

firm belief and profeſſion of Chriſtianity, notwithſtanding the trouble and perſecutions that would certainly attend them. He therefore repreſents our Saviour in his divine nature, as far ſuperior to all angels, and all created Beings: and in his mediatorial capacity as a greater prieſt than Aaron, and a greater king and prieſt than Melchiſedec: he ſhews that the ceremonies, the ſacrifices, and the obſervances of the law could have no virtue in themſelves, but only as they were the types of Jeſus Chriſt; and being now accompliſhed in his perſon, were finally and totally aboliſhed: he inſiſts on the neceſſity of faith, and, by the examples of the patriarchs and prophets, proves that juſtification can be procured no other way, than by the merits of a dying Saviour. And, laſtly, he mingles many excellent precepts for the regulation of their lives; exhortations to put truſt and confidence in Chriſt, in all their ſufferings; and ſtrict cautions againſt apoſtacy from his religion in the hotteſt perſecutions.

Having thus diſcharged his miniſtry, both by preaching and writing in Italy, St. Paul, accompanied by Timothy, proſecuted his long intended journey into Spain; and according to the teſtimony of ſeveral writers, croſſed the ſea, and preached the Goſpel in Britain.

What ſucceſs he had in theſe weſtern parts is not known; he however continued there eight or nine months, and then returned again to the eaſt, viſited Sicily, Greece, and Crete, and then repaired into Judea.

But how long he continued in his native country is unknown, no farther mention being made of him, till his return to Rome, which was probably about the eighth or ninth year of Nero's reign. Here he met with Peter, and was together with him thrown into priſon, doubtleſs in the general perſecution raiſed againſt the chriſtians, under pretence that they had ſet fire to the city. But beſides this general, there were particular reaſons for his impriſonment. Some of the ancients ſay he was engaged with St. Peter in detecting the impoſitions of Simon Magus. St Chryſoſtome tells us that Nero was highly enraged againſt St. Paul, for his having converted one of his favourite concubines; and the apoſtle, after he was thrown into priſon, perſiſting to perſuade the lady to continue in her chaſte and pious reſolutions, Nero commanded him to be put to death.

How long he remained in priſon is uncertain; nor do we know whether he was ſcourged before his execution. He was however allowed the privilege of a Roman citizen, and therefore beheaded. As he was led to the place of execution, he is ſaid to have converted three of the ſoldiers ſent to guard and conduct him, and who ſoon after became martyrs to the faith. Being come to the place of execution, which was the Aquæ Salviæ, three miles from Rome, he cheerfully, after a ſolemn preparation, gave his neck to the fatal ſtroke; and from this vale of miſery paſſed to the bliſful regions of immortality, to the kingdom of his beloved

beloved maſter, the great Redeemer of the human race.

He was buried in the Via Oſtienſis, about two miles from Rome: and about the year 317, Conſtantine the Great, at the inſtance of Pope Sylveſter, built a ſtately church over his grave, adorned it with an hundred marble columns, and beautified it with the moſt exquiſite workmanſhip. But this church being thought too ſmall for the honour of ſo great an apoſtle, Valentinian, by a reſcript to Sauſtius, prefect of the city, cauſed it to be taken down, and a much larger ſtructure to be erected, which was finiſhed after his death by Theodoſius; and farther beautified by Placida the empreſs, at the perſuaſion of Leo, biſhop of Rome.

St. Paul, according to Nicephorus, was of a low and ſmall ſtature, ſomewhat ſtooping; his complexion was fair; his countenance grave; his head ſmall; his eyes ſparkling; his noſe high and bending, and his hair thick and dark, but mixed with grey. His conſtitution was weak, and often ſubject to diſtempers.

But how mean ſoever the cabinet might be, there was a treaſure within precious and valuable, as will ſufficiently appear if we view the accompliſhments of his mind. His judgment was clear and ſolid, his invention quick, and his memory ſtrong and clear; all which were greatly improved by art, and the advantages of a liberal education. The ſchools of Tarſus and Jeruſalem had ſharpened his diſcurſive faculty by logick and the arts of reaſoning; inſtructed him in the inſtitutions of philoſophy, and adorned his mind with every kind of human learning. A ſufficient proof, that it is not unlawful to bring the ſpoils of Egypt into the ſervice of the ſanctuary; and to make uſe of the advantages of foreign ſtudies and human literature to divine and excellent purpoſes. He ſeems indeed to have been educated purpoſely to qualify him for being the apoſtle of the Gentiles, to contend with and confute the grave and the wiſe, the acute, and the ſubtle, the ſage and the learned of the heathen world, and to wound them with arrows from their own quiver. He ſeldom indeed made uſe of learning and philoſophy; it being more agreeable to the deſigns of the Goſpel, to confound the wiſdom and learning of the world, by the plain doctrine of the croſs.

Theſe were great accompliſhments, though only a ſhadow of that divine temper of mind he enjoyed, and which diſcovered itſelf through the whole courſe of his life. He was humble to the loweſt ſtep of debaſement and condeſcenſion, none ever thinking better of others, or more meanly of himſelf. And tho', when he had to deal with envious and malicious adverſaries, who endeavoured by villifying his perſon, to obſtruct his miniſtry, he knew how to magnify his office, and to let them know that he was not inferior to the chiefeſt of the apoſtles; yet at other times he always declared to the world, that he conſidered himſelf as an abortive, or an untimely birth, as *the leaſt of the apoſtles, not meet to be called an apoſtle*; and as if this were

not enough, he formed a word on purpoſe to expreſs his humility, ſtiling himſelf *Elachiſtoteron, leſs than the leaſt of the ſaints*; nay, *the very chief of ſinners*. How freely and freequently does he confeſs, that, before his converſion, he was a *blaſphemer*, a *perſecutor*, a perſon that injured both God and man? though honoured with the higheſt grace and favour, taken up to an immediate converſe with God in heaven, yet he never ſhewed the leaſt loftineſs over his brethren: he was intruſted with the greateſt power and authority in the church, but never affected to govern the faith of men; he only endeavoured to be *an helper of their joy*. How ſtudiouſly did he decline all the honours and commendations that were heaped upon him? When ſome in the church of Corinth magnified him; and, under the patronage of his name, began to ſet up for a party, he ſeverely rebuked them, told them that it was Chriſt, not he that was crucified for them; that they *had not been baptized into his name*, nor did he remember to have baptized above three or four of them, and was heartily glad he had no oftener performed the ceremony, leſt a foundation might have been laid for that ſuſpicion.

His temperance and ſobriety were remarkable; for he often abridged himſelf of the conveniency of lawful and neceſſary accommodations; his hungrings and thirſtings were frequent; by which means he reduced the extravagancy of the ſenſual appetites to a perfect ſubjection of the law of reaſon. Hence he eaſily got above the world, with all its charms and frowns, and his mind was continually converſant in heaven, where his thoughts were fixed, and whither his deſires always aſcended. What he taught to others he practiſed himſelf; his *converſation was in heaven*, and his *deſires were to depart, and to be with Chriſt*. This world neither arreſted his affection nor diſturbed his fears: he was neither pleaſed with its applauſes, nor terrified with its threatenings: he ſtudied not to pleaſe men, nor valued the cenſures they paſſed upon him: he was not greedy of a great eſtate, titles of honour, or rich preſents from men; food and raiment was his bill of fare, and more than this he never cared for: accounting, that the leſs he was clogged with theſe things, the lighter he ſhould march to heaven, eſpecially as he was travelling through a world overrun with troubles and perſecutions. And hence it is very probable, that he always led a ſingle life, though ſome of the ancients rank him among the married apoſtles.

His kindneſs and charity were remarkable; he had a compaſſionate tenderneſs for the poor, and a quick ſenſe of the wants of others. To what church ſoever he came, it was always one of his firſt cares to make proviſion for the poor, and to ſtir up the bounty of the rich and wealthy: nay, he himſelf worked often with his own hands, not only to maintain himſelf, but alſo to help and relieve them. But his charity to the ſouls of men was infinitely greater, fearing no dangers, refuſing no labours, going through good and evil report,

that

that he might gain men over to the knowledge of the truth, bring them out of the crooked paths of vice and idolatry, and place them in the ſtrait way that leadeth to life eternal. Nay, ſo inſatiable was his thirſt for the good of ſouls, that he affirms that he would ſooner himſelf be accurſed from Chriſt, than that his countrymen ſhould miſcarry. And as he was infinitely ſollicitous to gain them over to the religion of the Son of God, ſo he was equally careful to keep them from being ſeduced from it; ready to ſuſpect every thing that might *corrupt their minds from the ſimplicity that is in Chriſt. I am jealous over you*, ſays he to the church of Corinth, *with a godly jealouſy*. An affection of all others the moſt active and vigilant, and which inſpires men with the moſt paſſionate care and concern for the good of thoſe for whom we have the higheſt degree of love and kindneſs. Nor was his charity to men greater than his zeal to God, labouring with all his might to promote the honour of his maſter. How remarkably zealous was he while he continued a member of the Jewiſh religion, of the tradition of the fathers! How earneſt to vindicate and aſſert the divinity of the Moſaick diſpenſation, and to perſecute all who were of a contrary faith, even to rage and madneſs! And when his zeal was afterwards turned into a right channel, it ran with a ſwift current, carrying him out againſt all oppoſition to ruin the kingdom and the powers of darkneſs, to beat down idolatry, and plant the world with the right apprehenſions of God, and the true notions of religion. When at Athens he ſaw them involved in the groſſeſt ſuperſtition and idolatry, and giving the honour that was due to God alone to ſtatues and images, this fired his zeal, and he could not but let them know the reſentments of his mind, and how greatly they diſhonoured God, the great maker and preſerver of the world.

This zeal muſt have rendered him remarkably diligent and induſtrious in the execution of his office, warning, reproving, intreating, perſuading, preaching *in ſeaſon and out of ſeaſon*, by night and by day, by ſea and by land; he thought no pains too much to be taken, no dangers too great to be overcome. For thirty five years after his converſion, he ſeldom ſtaid long in one place, travelling from Jeruſalem thro' Arabia, Aſia, Greece, to Illyricum, to Rome, and to the utmoſt bounds of the weſtern world, *preaching the Goſpel of Chriſt*. Running, ſays St. Jerom, from ocean to ocean, like the ſun in the heavens, of which it is ſaid, *his circuit is from the one end of heaven to the other*, ſooner wanting ground to tread on than a deſire to propagate the faith of Chriſt. Nicephorus compares him to a bird in the air, which, in a few years, flew round the world: Iſidore to a winged huſbandman, who flew from place to place, to cultivate the world with the moſt exact rules and inſtitutions of life. And while the other apoſtles confined themſelves, as it were, to one ſpot, chuſing this or that particular province, and place

for

for their miniſtry, St. Paul over-ran the whole world to its utmoſt bounds and corners, planting all places where he came with the divine doctrines of the Goſpel. Nor in this courſe was he tired with the dangers and difficulties he met with, the troubles and oppoſitions that were raiſed againſt him. But all theſe ſerved only to reflect a greater luſtre on his patience; of which he was a moſt eminent pattern, enduring the greateſt troubles and perſecutions, with a patience triumphant and unconquerable. This will eaſily appear if we take a ſurvey of what trials and ſufferings he underwent; ſome part whereof are thus briefly ſummed up by himſelf: *In labours abundant, in ſtripes above meaſure, in priſons frequent, in deaths oft; thrice beaten with rods, once ſtoned, thrice ſuffered ſhipwreck, a night and a day in the deep. In journeyings often, in perils of water, in perils by his countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderneſs, in perils in the ſea, in perils among falſe brethren; in wearineſs and painfulneſs, in watchings often, in hunger and thirſt; in faſtings often, in cold and nakedneſs; and beſides thoſe things that were without, which daily came upon him, the care of all the churches.* An account, though very great, yet far ſhort of what he endured. All which he generouſly underwent with a ſoul as calm and ſerene as the morning ſun; no malice or rage, nor fury or ſtorms, could ruffle or diſcompoſe his ſpirit: nay, they animated him to riſe up with the greater eagerneſs and reſolution to perform his duty. Could all the powers of men and devils, ſpite and oppoſition, torments, and threatnings, have been able to baffle him out of that religion he had embraced, he muſt have deſerted his ſtation. But his ſoul was ſteeled with a courage and reſolution that was impenetrable, and on which no temptation, either from hopes or fears, could make any more impreſſion, than an arrow ſhot againſt a wall of adamant. He did not want ſollicitations both from Jews and Gentiles; and might, doubtleſs, in ſome meaſure, have made his own terms, would he have been falſe to his truſt, and quitted that way which was then every where ſpoken againſt. But, alas! theſe things weighed little with our apoſtle, who *counted not his life dear unto him, ſo that he might finiſh his courſe with joy, and the miniſtry which he had received of the Lord Jeſus.* And therefore, when he thought himſelf under the ſentence of death, could triumphantly ſay, *I have fought a good fight, I have finiſhed my courſe, I have kept the faith.* In ſhort, he was a man in whom the divine life eminently diſplayed itſelf; he lived piouſly and devoutly, ſoberly and temperately, juſtly and righteouſly; careful *always to keep a conſcience void of offence both towards God and man.* This, he tells us, was his ſupport under all his ſufferings; this the foundation of his confidence towards God, and his firm hopes of happineſs in another world. *This is our rejoicing, the teſtimony of our conſcience, that in ſimplicity and godly ſincerity we have had our converſation in the world.*


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Engraved for the Life of Our Saviour.
S.t Andrew the Apostle

Saint ANDREW.

CHAP. I:

The tranſactions of St. Andrew, from his birth to the aſcenſion of the bleſſed Jeſus.

THE ſacred hiſtorians, who have largely deſcribed the tranſactions of St. Peter and St. Paul, have been ſparing in their accounts of the other apoſtles, giving us only now and then a few oblique ſtrokes and accidental remarks concerning them. Why no more of their reſpective actions were recorded by the penmen of the holy ſcriptures is to us unknown. Perhaps the divine providence thought it convenient that no farther account ſhould be given of the firſt planting of chriſtianity in the world, than what concerned Judea and the neighbouring countries, at leaſt the moſt eminent places in the Roman empire, that the truth of the prophetical predictions might appear, which had foretold, That *the law* of the Meſſiah *ſhould come forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jeruſalem.* Beſides, a particular relation of the acts of ſo many apoſtles, performed in ſo many countries muſt have ſwelled the ſacred volumes to an enormous bulk, and conſequently rendered them leſs ſerviceable to the ordinary uſe of chriſtians.

St. Andrew was born at Bethſaida, a city of Galilee, built on the banks of the lake of Genneſareth, ſon to John or Jonas a fiſherman of that town. He was brother to Simon Peter, but whether elder or younger, is not certainly known, though the generality of the antients intimate that he was the younger. But, however that be, he was brought up to his father's trade, at which he laboured till our bleſſed Saviour called him to be *a fiſher of men*, for which he was, by ſome preparatory inſtitutions qualified even before the appearance of the Meſſiah.

John the Baptiſt had lately preached the doctrine of repentance; and was, by the generality of the Jews, from the impartiality of his precepts, and the remarkable ſtrictneſs and auſterity of his life, held in great veneration. He trained up his proſelytes under the diſcipline of repentance, and, by urging on them a ſevere change and reformation of life, prepared them to entertain the doctrine of the Meſſiah, whoſe approach he told them was now near at hand; repreſenting to them the greatneſs of his perſon, and the importance of the deſign on which he came into the world. Beſides the multitudes that flocked to the Bap-

tiſt's diſcourſes, he, according to the cuſtom of the Jewiſh maſters, had ſome peculiar and ſelect diſciples, who more conſtantly attended on his lectures, and generally waited upon his perſon.

In the number of theſe followers was our apoſtle; and was with him beyond Jordan, when the Meſſiah, who had ſome time before been baptized, came that way. Upon his approach, the Baptiſt pointed him out as the Meſſiah, ſtiling him *the Lamb of God*, the true ſacrifice, that was to expiate the ſins of the world. As ſoon as the Baptiſt had given this character of Jeſus, Andrew, and another diſciple, probably St. John, followed the Saviour of mankind to the place of his abode.

After ſome converſation with him Andrew departed, and having found his brother Simon, informed him that he had diſcovered the great Meſſiah ſo long expected by the houſe of Jacob; and accordingly brought him to Jeſus. They did not, however, ſtay long with their maſter, but returned to their calling.

Something more than a year after Jeſus paſſing through Galilee, found Andrew and Peter fiſhing on the ſea of Galilee, where he fully ſatisfied them of the greatneſs and divinity of his perſon, by a miraculous draught of fiſhes, which they took at his command. He now told them that they ſhould enter on a different ſeries of labours, and inſtead of fiſh, they ſhould, by the efficacy and influence of their doctrine, catch men; commanding them to follow him, as his immediate diſciples and attendants; and they accordingly left all and followed him.

Shortly after, Andrew, together with the reſt, was called to the office and honour of the apoſtulate, and made choice of to be one of Chriſt's immediate vicegerents for planting and propagating the chriſtian church.

CHAP. II.

The tranſactions of St. Andrew, from our bleſſed Saviour's aſcenſion, till his martyrdom.

AFTER the aſcenſion of the bleſſed Jeſus into heaven, and the Holy Ghoſt had deſcended in a viſible manner on the apoſtles, to qualify them for their great undertaking, that of rooting out profaneneſs and idolatry, and ſubduing the world to the doctrine of the goſpel, St. Andrew, according to the generality of ancient writers, was choſen to preach the goſpel in Scythia, and the neighbouring countries.

Accordingly, he departed from Jeruſalem, and firſt travelled through Cappadocia, Galatia, and Bithynia, inſtructing the inhabitants in the faith of Chriſt, and continued his journey along the Euxine ſea, into the ſolitudes of Scythia. An ancient author has given us a more circumſtantial detail of the travels of St. Andrew, but it is uncertain from whence he drew his information. He tells us, that he firſt came to Amynſus, where being entertained by a Jew, he went into the ſynagogue, preached to them concerning Jeſus, and from the prophecies of

of the Old Teſtament, proved him to be the Meſſiah, and the Saviour of the world. Having converted many here, he ſettled the times of their public meetings, and ordained them prieſts. He went next to Trapezius, a maritime city on the Euxine ſea; from whence, after viſiting many other places, he came to Nice, where he ſtaid two years preaching, and working miracles with great ſucceſs. After leaving Nice, he paſſed to Nicomedia, and from thence to Chalcedon, whence he ſailed through the Propontis, came by the Euxine ſea to Heraclea, and afterwards to Amaſtris. In all theſe places he met with the greateſt difficulties, but overcame them by an invincible patience and reſolution.

He next came to Sinope, a city ſituated on the ſame ſea, and famous both for the birth and burial of king Mithridates: here he met with his brother Peter, and ſtaid with him a conſiderable time at this place. The inhabitants of Sinope were moſtly Jews, who, partly from a zeal for their religion, and partly from their barbarous manners, were exaſperated againſt St. Andrew, and entered into a confederacy to burn the houſe in which he lodged. But being diſappointed in their deſign, they treated him with the moſt ſavage cruelty, throwing him on the ground, ſtamping upon him with their feet, pulling and dragging him from place to place; ſome beating him with clubs, ſome pelting him with ſtones, and others, to ſatisfy their brutal revenge, biting off his fleſh with their teeth; till apprehending they had entirely deprived him of life, they caſt him out into the fields. But he miraculouſly recovered, and returned publickly into the city; by which, and other miracles he wrought among them, he converted many from the error of their ways, and induced them to become diſciples of the bleſſed Jeſus.

Departing from Sinope, he returned to Amynſus, paſſed from thence through Trapezius, and Neocæſarea to Samoſata, where he ſilenced the acuteſt and wiſeſt philoſophers of that country: and, after ſpending ſome time there in preaching the glad tidings of the goſpel, he returned to Jeruſalem. But he did not continue long in his native country, returning again to the province allotted him for the exerciſe of his miniſtry, travelling firſt into the country of the Abaſgi, and had great ſucceſs in preaching the goſpel to the inhabitants of the city of Sebaſtople, ſituated on the eaſtern ſhore of the Euxine ſea, between the rivers Phaſis and Apſarus. From thence he removed into the country of the Zecchi, and the Boſphorani; but finding the people remarkably barbarous, and intractable, he did not ſtay long among them, except at Cherſon, a large and populous city within the Boſphorus, where he had great ſucceſs in his miniſtry; and therefore continued ſome time with the new converts to inſtruct and confirm them in the faith. From this city he paſſed by ſea to Sinope, the royal ſeat of Mithridates, to encourage and confirm the churches he had planted in thoſe parts; and here

he ordained Philolgos, formerly one of St. Paul's diſciples, biſhop of that city.

After leaving Sinope he came to Byzantium, ſince called Conſtantinople, where he inſtructed the inhabitants in the chriſtian religion, founded a church for divine worſhip, and ordained Stachys, firſt biſhop of that place. But being baniſhed from the city, he fled to Argyropolis, where he preached the goſpel for two years together with remarkable ſucceſs, converting great numbers to the chriſtian faith.

He next travelled over Thrace, Macedonia, Theſſaly, Acaia, and Epirus, preaching the goſpel, propagating Chriſtianity, and confirming the doctrine he taught with ſigns and miracles. At laſt he came to Patrea, a city of Achaia, where he gave his laſt and greateſt teſtimony to the goſpel of his divine Maſter, I mean, he ſealed it with his blood, and received the crown of martyrdom in the following manner.

Ægeas, proconſul of Achaia, came at this time to Patrea, where, obſerving that multitudes had abandoned the heathen religion and embraced chriſtianity, he had recourſe to every method both of favour and cruelty, to reduce the people to their old idolatry. The apoſtle, whom no difficulties or dangers could deter from performing the duties of his miniſtry, addreſſed himſelf to the proconſul, calmly put him in mind that being only a judge of men, he ought to revere him who was the ſupreme and impartial judge of all, pay him the divine honours due to his exalted majeſty, and abandon the impieties of his idolatrous worſhip. The proconſul, inſtead of aſſenting to theſe arguments of the apoſtle, ridiculed him as an innovator in religion, and a propagator of that ſuperſtition, whoſe author the Jews had put to the infamous death of the croſs. On his mentioning the croſs, our apoſtle took the opportunity of repreſenting to him the infinite love and kindneſs of our great Redeemer, who came down from heaven to purchaſe the ſalvation of mankind; and to obtain it did not diſdain to die upon the croſs. The proconſul anſwered, that he might hope to perſuade the credulous multitude of the truth of what he ſaid: but for his part he would not liſten to ſuch a legendary tale; and if he did not comply with him, in doing ſacrifice to the gods, he would cauſe him to ſuffer upon that croſs he had ſo highly magnified. St. Andrew replied, that he ſacrificed every day to God, the only true and omnipotent Being, not with fumes and bloody offerings, but in the ſacrifice of the immaculate lamb of God. This anſwer provoked the proconſul; and he committed the apoſtle to priſon; which ſo exaſperated the people, that a mutiny would have enſued, had not St. Andrew reſtrained them, perſuading them to imitate the mildneſs and patience of the meek and humble Jeſus, and not hinder him from receiving the crown of martyrdom, which now waited for him.

The next day he was again brought before the proconſul, who perſuaded him

him not fooliſhly to throw away his life, but preſerve it, and enjoy the pleaſures of the world. The apoſtle told him, that if he would renounce his idolatries, and heartily embrace the chriſtian faith, he ſhould, with him and the members who had believed in the Son of God, receive eternal happineſs in the Meſſiah's kingdom. The proconſul anſwered, that he himſelf ſhould never embrace the religion he mentioned; and that the only reaſon why he was ſo earneſt with him to ſacrifice to the gods was, that thoſe whom he had everywhere ſeduced, might, by his example, be brought back to the ancient religion they had forſaken. To which the apoſtle replied, that he ſaw it was in vain to endeavour to perſuade a perſon incapable of ſober counſels, and hardened in his own blindneſs and folly; that with regard to himſelf, he might act as he pleaſed, and if he had any torment greater than another, he might heap that upon him; as the greater conſtancy he ſhewed in his ſufferings for Chriſt, the more acceptable he ſhould be to his Lord and Maſter. Ægeas could hold no longer, but paſſed ſentence of death upon him.

He firſt ordered him to be ſcourged, ſeven lictors ſucceſſively whipping his naked body; and ſeeing his invincible patience and conſtancy, commanded him to be crucified; but to be faſtened to the croſs with cords inſtead of nails, that his death might be more lingering and tedious. As he was led to the place of execution, walking with a chearful and compoſed mind, the people cried out, that a good and innocent man was unjuſtly condemned to die. On his coming near the croſs, he ſaluted it in the following manner: "I have "long deſired and expected this "happy hour. The croſs has been "conſecrated by the body of Chriſt "hanging on it, and adorned with "his members as with ſo many in-"eſtimable jewels. I therefore "come joyfully and triumphing to "it, that it may receive me as a "diſciple and follower of him who "once hung upon it, and be the "means of carrying me ſafe to my "Maſter, being the inſtrument on "which he redeemed me."

After offering up his prayers to the throne of grace, and exhorted the people to conſtancy and perſeverance in the religion he had delivered to them, he was faſtened to the croſs, on which he hung two whole days, teaching and inſtructing the people. In the mean time great intereſt was made to the proconſul to ſpare his life; but the apoſtle earneſtly begged of the Almighty, that he might now depart, and ſeal the truth of his religion with his blood. His prayers were heard, and he immediately expired on the laſt of November, but in what year is uncertain.

There ſeems to have been ſomething peculiar in the croſs on which he ſuffered; and is commonly thought to have been a croſs decuſſate, or two pieces of timber croſſing each other in the center, in the form of the letter X, hence uſually known by the name of

of St. Andrew's croſs; though ſome affirm that he was crucified on an olive-tree.

His body being taken from the croſs, was decently and honourably interred by Maximilla, a lady of great quality and eſtate, and whom Nicephorus tells us was wife to the proconſul. Conſtantine the Great afterwards removed his body to Conſtantinople, and buried it in the great church he had built to the honour of the apoſtles: but this ſtructure being taken down ſome hundred of years after, in order to rebuild it, by Juſtinian the emperor, the body of St. Andrew was found in a wooden coffin, and again depoſited in its proper place.

Heſychus, presbyter of Jeruſalem, has given the following encomiaſtic character of St. Andrew, with which I ſhall conclude this account of his life. "St. Andrew "was the firſt born of the apoſtolic "choir, the principal and firſt pillar "of the church, *a rock before the* "*rock*, the foundation of that foun- "dation, the firſt fruits of the "beginning, a caller before he "was called himſelf; he preach- "ed that goſpel which was not "yet revealed or entertained; he "revealed and made known that "life to his brother, which he had "not yet perfectly learned himſelf. "So great treaſures did that one "queſtion bring him, *Maſter, where* "*dwelleſt thou?* which he ſoon per- "ceived by the anſwer, *Come and* "*ſee.* How art thou become "a prophet? whence thus divinely "ſkilful? what is it that thou found- "eſt in Peter's ears, *We have found* "*him of whom Moſes and the pro-* "*phets did write?* &c. Why doſt "thou attempt to compaſs him, "whom thou canſt not comprehend? "how can he be found who is om- "nipreſent? But he well knew "what he ſaid, we have found him "whom Adam loſt, whom Eve in- "jured, whom the clouds of ſin "have hidden from us, and to "whom our trangreſſions had hi- "therto rendered us ſtrangers. Thus "had St. Andrew the honour of "being the firſt apoſtle that preach- "ed the Goſpel of the Son of "God."

Saint

Saint JAMES the Great.

CHAP. I.

The tranſactions of St. James the Great, from his birth to the aſcenſion of the Son of God.

ST. James, called *the Great*, to diſtinguiſh him from another apoſtle, was a native of Galilee, born in all probability either at Capernaum or Bethſaida, as he was a partner with Simon Peter in the fiſhing trade. He was the ſon of Zebedee, a fiſherman, who kept ſeveral ſervants to carry on his trade, and therefore muſt have been a perſon of ſome conſequence in his way. His mother's name was Mary, ſirnamed Salome, the daughter of Cleopas, and ſiſter or rather couſin-german to Mary the mother of our Lord; ſo that he had the honour of being a near relation to Chriſt himſelf.

He was brought up to the trade of his father; a mean occupation, indeed, in the eye of the world, but no employment is mean that is honeſt and induſtrious; and it ſhould be remembered that the Son of God himſelf ſtooped ſo low, as to become the reputed ſon of a carpenter, and during the retirement of his private life laboured himſelf at his father's trade; not merely devoting himſelf to contemplations, nor withdrawing from all uſeful ſociety with the world, and hiding himſelf in the ſolitudes of an anchoret, but buſying himſelf in an active courſe of life.

St. James was not diſcouraged at the meanneſs of his father's trade; but applied himſelf to it with remarkable aſſiduity, and was exerciſing his employment when the Saviour of the world paſſing by the ſea of Galilee, ſaw him with his brother in the ſhip, and called them both to be his diſciples. Nor was the call in vain; they cheerfully complied with it, and immediately left all to follow him. They did not ſtay to diſpute his commands, or ſolicitouſly enquire into the minute conſequences of the undertaking, the troubles and dangers that might attend this new employment; but readily delivered themſelves up to perform whatever ſervice he ſhould appoint them.

Soon after this, he was called, from the ſtation of an ordinary diſciple, to the apoſtolical office, and even honoured with ſome particular favours beyond moſt of the apoſtles, being one of the three whom our Lord made choice of, as his companions in the more intimate tranſactions

ſactions of his life, from which the reſt were excluded. Thus, with Peter and his brother John, he attended his Maſter when he raiſed the daughter of Jairus from the dead; he was admitted to Chriſt's glorious transfiguration on the mount, and heard the diſcourſes that paſſed between him and the great miniſters from the courts of heaven: and when the holy Jeſus was to undergo his bitter agonies in the garden, as preparatory ſufferings to his paſſion, James was one of the three taken to be a ſpectator of them. It is not eaſy to determine what reaſons induced the Redeemer of mankind to admit thoſe three apoſtles to peculiar acts of favour; though he doubtleſs did it for wiſe and proper ends; whether he deſigned theſe three to be more ſolemn and peculiar witneſſes of ſome remarkable tranſactions of his life than the other apoſtles, or that they would be more eminently uſeful and ſerviceable in ſome parts of the apoſtolic office, or to encourage them thereby to prepare for the ſufferings that would attend them in the miniſtry, deſigning them for ſome more eminent kinds of martyrdom than the reſt.

Nor was it the leaſt inſtance of that particular honour our Lord conferred on theſe apoſtles, that at his calling them to the apoſtolate, he gave them a new name and title. A thing not uncommon of old, for the Almighty often impoſed new names on perſons, when he intended them for ſome great and peculiar ſervices and employments; inſtances of this we have in Abraham and Jacob. Accordingly our Lord, at the election of theſe three apoſtles, gave them new names. Simon he called *Peter*, or a rock, and James and John, *Boanerges*, or the ſons of thunder. What our Lord intended by their ſirname is much eaſier to conjecture than determine; ſome think it was given them on account of their being preſent in the mount, when a voice came out of the cloud, ſaying, *This is my beloved Son*, &c. for when the people heard the ſame voice at another time, they ſaid *it thundered*. But this obſervation is in itſelf very inconſiderable, becauſe it was equally applicable to Peter as to them. Others think that it was given them an account of their loud and bold preaching the goſpel to the world, fearing no threatnings, deſpiſing all oppoſition, and going on thundring in the ears of a drowſy and ſleepy world; rouſing and awakening the conſciences of men with the earneſtneſs and vehemence of their preaching, which reſembled thunder, as the voice of God powerfully ſhakes the natural world, and break in pieces the cedars of Lebanon. Others think it relates to the doctrines they delivered, teaching the great myſteries and ſpeculations of the goſpel in a profounder and more loftier ſtrain than the reſt. How far this might be true with regard to St. James, the Scripture is wholly ſilent, but it was certainly verified in his brother John, whoſe goſpel is ſo full of the more ſublime notions and myſteries of the goſpel concerning the divinity, the pre-exiſtence, &c. of Chriſt, that he

is

is generally affirmed by the ancients to thunder rather than ſpeak. Perhaps the expreſſion may denote no more than that in general they were to be prime and eminent miniſters, in this new ſtate of things; the introducing the goſpel or evangelical diſpenſation, being called *a voice ſhaking the heavens and the earth*, and therefore exactly correſpondent to the native importance of the word, ſignifying an *earthquake* or a vehement commotion, that makes a noiſe like thunder.

But however this be, our bleſſed Saviour doubtleſs alluded by this term to the furious and reſolute diſpoſition of theſe two brothers, who ſeem to have been of a more fiery temper than the reſt of the apoſtles, of which we have this memorable inſtance. When our Lord was determined on his journey to Jeruſalem, he ſent ſome of his diſciples before him to make preparations for his coming; but, on their entering a village of Samaria, were rudely rejected from the old grudge that ſubſiſted between the Samaritans and Jews, and becauſe our Saviour, by going up to Jeruſalem, ſeemed to ſlight their place of worſhip on mount Gerizim. This piece of rudneſs and inhumanity was ſo highly reſented by St. James and his brother, that they came to Jeſus; deſiring to know if he would not imitate Elias, by calling down fire from heaven to conſume this barbarous, inhoſpitable people. So apt are men for every trifling provocation to call upon heaven to revenge them on the aggreſſors according to the extravagancies of their own unreaſonable paſſions! But the holy Jeſus ſoon convinced them of their miſtake, by telling them that inſtead of deſtroying, he was come to ſave the lives of the children of men.

CHAP. II.

The tranſactions of St. James, from the Meſſiah's aſcenſion to his ſealing the truth of the goſpel with his blood.

WHAT became of St. James after the aſcenſion of his great and beloved Maſter, we have no account in ſacred hiſtory. Sophronius tells that he preached to the diſperſed Jews, that is, to thoſe converts who were diſperſed after the death of Stephen. The Spaniſh writers will have it that after preaching the Goſpel in ſeveral parts of Judea and Samaria, he viſited Spain, where he planted Chriſtianity, and appointed ſome ſelect diſciples to perfect what he had begun; but if we conſider the ſhortneſs of St. James's life, and that the apoſtles continued in a body at Jeruſalem, even after the diſperſion of the other chriſtians, we ſhall find it difficult to allow time ſufficient for ſo tedious and difficult a voyage as that was in thoſe early ages; and therefore it is ſafeſt to confine his miniſtry to Judea and the adjacent countries.

Herod Agrippa, ſon of Ariſtobulus and grandſon of Herod the Great, had been a great favourite both with the emperor Caligula, and his ſucceſſor Claudius, who confer-

red on him his granfather's kingdoms, and ſent him into Judea. Herod was noble and generous, prudent and politic, thoroughly verſed in all the arts and intrigues of a court; he knew how to oblige his enemies, and mollify or avert the diſpleaſure of the emperor. He was of a courteous and affable diſpoſition; but at the ſame time a great zealot of the Jewiſh religion, and a very accurate obſerver of the Moſaic law. This prince at his arrival in his new kingdom, thought there was no ſurer way of ingratiating himſelf into the favour of the populace, than by perſecuting the chriſtians, whom he knew the Jews deteſted. Accordingly, he began a violent perſecution; but the commonality being too mean a ſacrifice to ſatisfy his own zeal, and favour his popular deſigns, he laid hands on St. James, whoſe active temper and vigorous manner of contending for the truth and excellency of the chriſtian religion rendered him a proper victim on this occaſion.

The zeal which animated Herod to lay hands on St. James alſo animated him to paſs ſentence of death on him immediately. As he was led to the place of execution, the officer that guarded him to the tribunal, or rather his accuſer, having been converted by that remarkable courage and conſtancy ſhewn by the apoſtle at the time of his trial, repented of what he had done, came and fell down at the apoſtle's feet, and heartily begged pardon for what he had ſaid againſt him. The holy man, after recovering from the ſurprize, tenderly embraced him. *Peace*, ſaid he, *my ſon, peace be to thee and the pardon of thy faults.* Upon which the officer publickly declared himſelf a chriſtian, and both were beheaded at the ſame time. Thus fell the great apoſtle St. James, the firſt proto-martyr, the firſt of that number that gained the crown, taking chearfully that cup of which he had long ſince told his Lord he was ready to drink of.

But the divine vengeance, that never ſleeps, would not ſuffer the death of this innocent and righteous man to paſs long unrevenged; for ſhortly after the martyrdom of St. James, Herod removed to Cæſarea, in order to make war on the neighbouring Tyrians and Sidonians: and while he continued in this city, he proclaimed ſolemn fights and feſtival entertainments to be held in honour of Cæſar, to which there flocked a prodigious confluence of the principal inhabitants of the adjacent parts. Early in the morning of the ſecond day he came with great ſtate into the theatre, to make an oration to people and being cloathed in a robe curiouſly wrought with ſilver, the beams of the ſun were reflected from it with ſuch luſtre, that the people cried out, that it was ſome deity they beheld; and that he who ſpake to them muſt be ſomething above the common ſtandard of humanity. This impious applauſe Herod received without the leaſt token of diſlike, or ſenſe of the injury that was done by it to the ſupreme Being. But a ſudden accident changed the ſcene, and turned their mirth and rejoicing into

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S^t. IOHN *the* APOSTLE.

into melancholy and mourning. For Herod looking up he ſaw an owl perched upon a rope over his head, which he conſidered as the fatal miniſter of his death. On which an incurable melancholy ſeized his mind, and the moſt exquiſite torments his bowels, occaſioned by thoſe worms St. Luke mentions; ſo that turning to the people, he cried out: "Behold the Deity you admired, "and yourſelves evidently convinced of flattery and falſehood: ſee "me this moment condemned by "the laws of fate to die, whom juſt "now you ſtiled immortal." He was removed into the palace, but his pains ſtill increaſed upon him; and though the people faſted and offered up prayers for his life and health, yet his acute torments prevailed, and after five days put a period to his life.

Saint JOHN the Evangeliſt.

CHAP. I.

The tranſactions of St. John, from his birth to the aſcenſion of his great Lord and Maſter.

ST. John was a native of Galilee, the ſon of Zebedee and Salome, one of thoſe devout women that conſtantly attended on our Lord in his miniſtry, and brother of James the Great.

Before his becoming a diſciple of the bleſſed Jeſus, he was in all probability a follower of John the Baptiſt, and is thought to be that other diſciple, who, in the firſt chapter of his goſpel, is ſaid to have been preſent with Andrew when John declared Jeſus to be *the Lamb of God*, and thereupon to have followed him to the place of his abode.

He was by much the youngeſt of the apoſtles, yet he was admitted into as great a ſhare of his Maſter's confidence as any of them. He was one of thoſe to whom he communicated the moſt private meſſages of his life; one of thoſe whom he took with him when he raiſed the daughter of Jairus from the dead; one of thoſe to whom he exhibited a ſpecimen of his divinity, in his transfiguration on the mount; one of thoſe who were preſent at his conference with Moſes and Elias, and heard that voice which declared him *the beloved Son of God*; and one

of thoſe who were companions in his ſolitude, moſt retired devotions, and bitter agonies in the garden. Thus of the three, who were made the witneſſes of their maſter's actions, which it was convenient to conceal, St. John conſtantly enjoyed the privilege of being one. Nay, even of theſe three, he ſeems to have had, in ſome reſpects, the preference. Witneſs his lying on his Maſter's boſom at the paſchal ſupper; and even when Peter was deſirous of knowing who was the perſon that ſhould betray their Maſter, and durſt not himſelf aſk the queſtion, he made uſe of St. John to propoſe it to their Lord.

Theſe inſtances of particular favour our apoſtle endeavoured in ſome meaſure to anſwer by returns of particular kindneſs and conſtancy. For though he at firſt deſerted his Maſter on his apprehenſion, yet he ſoon recovered himſelf, and came back to ſeek his Saviour, confidently entered the high-prieſt's hall, followed our Lord through the ſeveral particulars of his trial, and at laſt waited on him at his execution, owning him, as well as being owned by him, in the midſt of armed ſoldiers, and in the thickeſt crowds of his moſt inveterate enemies. Here it was that our great Redeemer committed to his care his ſorrowful and diſconſolate mother, with his dying breath. And certainly the holy Jeſus could not have given a more honourable teſtimony of his particular reſpect and kindneſs to St. John, than by leaving his own mother to his truſt and care, and ſubſtituting him to ſupply that duty he himſelf paid her while he reſided in this vale of ſorrow.

At the firſt news of our Lord's being riſen from the chambers of the duſt, he, in company with Peter, haſtened to the ſepulchre. There ſeems indeed to have been a peculiar intimacy between theſe two diſciples. It was Peter that St. John introduced into the palace of the high-prieſt; it was Peter to whom he gave notice of Chriſt's appearing when he came to them at the ſea of Tiberias, in the habit of a ſtranger; and it was for St. John that Peter was ſo ſolicitouſly inquiſitive to know what was determined concerning him.

CHAP. II.

The tranſactions of St. John, from the aſcenſion of Chriſt to his death.

AFTER the aſcenſion of the Saviour of the world, when the apoſtles made a diviſion of the province among themſelves, that of Aſia fell to the ſhare of St. John, though he did not immediately enter upon his charge, but continued at Jeruſalem till the death of the bleſſed Virgin, which happened about fifteen years after our Lord's aſcenſion. Being releaſed from the truſt committed to his care by his dying Maſter, he retired into Aſia, and induſtriouſly applied himſelf to the propagation of Chriſtianity, preaching where the Goſpel had not yet been known, and confirming it where it was already planted. Many churches of note and eminence were of his foun-

foundation, particularly thoſe of Smyrna, Pergamus, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodocea, and others; but his chief place of reſidence was at Epheſus, where St. Paul had many years before founded a church, and conſtituted Timothy biſhop of it. Nor can we ſuppoſe that he confined his miniſtry entirely to Aſia Minor; it is highly reaſonable to think that he preached in other parts of the eaſt; probably to the Parthians, his firſt epiſtle being anciently directed to them; and the Jeſuits aſſure us, that the inhabitants of the kingdom of Baſſora in India affirm, that, according to a tradition handed down from their anceſtors, St. John planted the chriſtian faith in their country.

After ſpending ſeveral years at Epheſus, he was accuſed to Domitian, who had begun a perſecution againſt the chriſtians, as an eminent aſſerter of atheiſm and impiety, and a public ſubverter of the religion of the empire; ſo that by his command, the proconſul ſent him bound to Rome, where he met with the treatment that might have been expected from ſo barbarous a prince, being thrown into a cauldron of boiling oil. But the Almighty, who reſerved him for farther ſervices in the vineyard of his ſon, reſtrained the heat, as he did in the fiery furnace of old, and delivered him from this ſeemingly unavoidable deſtruction. And ſurely one would have thought that ſo miraculous a deliverance ſhould have been ſufficient to have perſuaded any rational man that the religion he taught was from God, and that he was protected from danger by the hand of Omnipotence. But miracles themſelves were not ſufficient to convince this cruel emperor, or abate his fury. He ordered St. John to be tranſported to a diſconſolate iſland in the Archipelago called Patmos, where he continued ſeveral years inſtructing the poor inhabitants in the knowledge of the chriſtian faith; and here, about the end of Domitian's reign, he wrote his book of Revelations, exhibiting by viſions and prophetical repreſentations, the ſtate and condition of Chriſtianity in the future periods and ages of the church.

Upon the death of Domitian, and the ſucceſſion of Nerva, who repealed all the odious acts of his predeceſſor, and by publick edicts recalled thoſe whom the fury of Domitian had baniſhed, St. John returned to Aſia, and fixed his ſeat again at Epheſus; the rather becauſe the people of that city had lately martyred Timothy their Biſhop. Here, with the aſſiſtance of ſeven other biſhops, he took upon himſelf the government of the large dioceſe of Aſia Minor, erected oratories, and diſpoſed of the clergy in the beſt manner that the circumſtances of thoſe times would permit, ſpending his time in an indefatigable execution of his charge, travelling from eaſt to weſt to inſtruct the world in the principles of the holy religion he was ſent to propagate. In this manner St. John continued to labour in the vineyard of his great Maſter, till death put a period to all his toils and ſufferings; which happened in

the beginning of Trajan's reign, in the ninety-eighth year of his age, and he was, according to Euſebius, buried near Epheſus.

St. John ſeems always to have led a ſingle life; tho' ſome of the ancients tell us he was a married man. With regard to his natural temper, he ſeems to have been of an eager and reſolute diſpoſition, eaſily inflamed, but which age had reduced to a calmer temper. He was poliſhed by no ſtudy or arts of learning; but what was wanting from human art was abundantly ſupplied by the excellent conſtitution of his mind, and that fullneſs of divine grace with which he was adorned. His humility was admirable, ſtudiouſly concealing his own honour. For in his epiſtles he never ſtiles himſelf either apoſtle or evangeliſt; the title of preſbyter, or elder is all he aſſumes, and probably in regard to his age as much as his office. In his Goſpel, when he ſpeaks of *the diſciple whom Jeſus loved*, he conſtantly conceals his own name, leaving the reader to diſcover whom he meant. Love and charity he practiſed himſelf, and affectionately preſſed them upon others: the great love of his Saviour towards him ſeems to have inſpired his ſoul with a larger and more generous charity than the reſt. This is the great vein that runs thro' all his writings, eſpecially his epiſtles, where he urges it as the great and peculiar law of Chriſtianity, and without which all other pretences to the religion of the holy Jeſus are vain and frivolous, uſeleſs and inſignificant. And this was his conſtant practice to the very hour of his diſſolution; for when age and the decays of nature had rendered him ſo weak that he was unable to preach to the people any longer, he was conſtantly led, at every publick meeting, to the church at Epheſus, and always repeated to them the ſame precept, *Little children, love one another*. And when his hearers, wearied with the conſtant repetition of the ſame thing, aſked him why he never varied his diſcourſe, anſwered, Becauſe to love one another was the command of our bleſſed Saviour, and if they did nothing more, this alone was ſufficient.

But the largeſt meaſures of his charity were diſplayed in the remarkable care he took to preſerve the ſouls of men; travelling from eaſt to weſt in propagating the principles of that religion he was ſent to teach, patiently enduring every torment, ſurmounting every difficulty, and removing every obſtacle, to ſave the ſouls of the human race, free their minds from error and idolatry, and turn them from the paths of vice and debauchery. Among many other inſtances of this kind, the following is related by Euſebius.

During one of his viſitations of the church at Epheſus, he was greatly pleaſed with the appearance and behaviour of a young man, whom he called to him, and, with a ſpecial charge, recommended to the biſhop, who undertook the truſt, and promiſed to diſcharge it with the greateſt fidelity. Accordingly, the biſhop took him home with him to his houſe, carefully inſtructed him in the principles

ciples of the chriſtian religion, and at laſt baptized and confirmed him. After he had proceeded thus far, he thought he might a little relax the reins of diſcipline; but the youth made a bad uſe of his liberty, and being debauched by evil company, became the captain of a gang of robbers, and committed the moſt horrid outrages, in the adjacent countries. St. John, being informed of this at his return, ſharply reproved the biſhop, and determined to find him out; never conſidering the dangers that would inevitably attend him by venturing himſelf among perſons of deſperate fortunes. Accordingly, he repaired to the mountains where they uſually abode, and being taken by one of the robbers placed as a watch, he deſired to be carried to their captain, who, on ſeeing St. John coming towards him, immediately fled. The apoſtle, forgetting his age, haſted after him; but being unable to overtake him, he paſſionately cried out, "Child, why "doſt thou run from thy father, an "old and defenceleſs man? Spare "me this pains of following you, "and let not terror and deſpair ſeize "upon you. Your ſalvation is not "irrecoverable. Stay and be con"vinced that Chriſt himſelf hath ſent "me." At theſe words the young man ſtopped, fixed his eyes upon the earth, trembled in every part, and burſt into a flood of tears. And when the aged apoſtle approached he embraced him, and implored forgiveneſs with ſuch weeping and lamentations, that he ſeemed to be re-baptized, and to waſh away his ſins with his own tears. The apoſtle received him with the greateſt kindneſs, aſſured him that he had obtained pardon for his ſins at the hands of his great Redeemer, and returned him a true penitent and convert to the church

Another inſtance of our apoſtle's care for the ſoul's of men is the writings he left to poſterity. The firſt of which in time, tho' placed laſt in the ſacred canon, is his Apocalypſe, or book of Revelations, which he wrote during his baniſhment at Patmos. After the preface and admonition given to the biſhops of the ſeven churches in Aſia, it contains a prophetick view of the perſecutions the faithful were to ſuffer from the Jews, hereticks, and tyrannical princes; together with the peaceable and flouriſhing ſtate of the church, till diſturbed by other enemies; and the happineſs of the church triumphant in heaven. And hence St John is, in the ſtricteſt ſenſe, a prophet, and has thereby one material addition to his titles, being not only an apoſtle and Evangeliſt, but alſo a prophet: an honour peculiar to himſelf. St. Peter was an apoſtle, but no Evangeliſt: St Mark and St. Luke were Evangeliſts, but no apoſtles: St. Matthew was an apoſtle and Evangeliſt, but no prophet: but St. John was both an apoſtle, an Evangeliſt, and a prophet.

Next to the Apocalapſe, in order of time, are his three Epiſtles; the firſt of which is catholic, calculated for all times and places, containing the moſt excellent rules for the conduct of a chriſtian life, preſſing to holi-

holineſs and pureneſs of manners, and not to be ſatisfied with a naked and empty profeſſion of religion, not to be led away with the craſty inſinuations of ſeducers, and cautioning men againſt the poiſonous principles and practices of the Gnoſtics. The apoſtle here, according to his uſual modeſty, conceals his name, it being of more conſequence to a wiſe man what is ſaid than he who ſays it. It appears from St. Auguſtine, that this epiſtle was anciently iuſcribed to the Parthians, becauſe in all probability, St. John preached the goſpel in Parthia. The other two epiſtles are but ſhort, and directed to particular perſons; the one a lady of great quality, the other to the charitable and hoſpitable Gaius, the kindeſt friend, and the moſt courteous entainer of all indigent chriſtians.

Euſebius, and after him St. Jerom, informs us, that St. John having peruſed the other three goſpels, approved and confirmed them by his authority; but obſerving at the ſame that theſe Evangeliſt had omitted ſeveral of our bleſſed Saviour's tranſactions, particularly thoſe which were performed before the Baptiſt's impriſonment, he wrote his goſpel to ſupply what was wanting in them; and becauſe ſeveral heretics were at that time ſprung up in the church, who denied the divinity of our bleſſed Saviour, he took care to guard againſt theſe hereſies, by proving that our great Redeemer was God from everlaſting. He largely records our Saviour's diſcourſes, but takes little notice of his miracles, probably becauſe they are ſo fully and particularly related by the other Evangeliſts.

Before he undertook the task of writing his goſpel, he cauſed a general faſt to be kept by all the Aſian churches, to implore the bleſſing of heaven on ſo great and momentous an undertaking. When this was done he ſet about the work, and compleated it in ſo excellent and ſublime a manner that the ancients generally compared him to an eagle's ſoaring aloft among the clouds, whither the weak eye of man was not able to follow him. "Among all "the evangelical writers, ſays St. "Baſil, none are like St. John, the "ſon of thunder, for the ſublimity "of his ſpeech, and the height of "his diſcourſes, which are beyond "any man's capacity fully to reach "and comprehend." "St. John, "as a true ſon of thunder, ſays "Epiphanius, by a loftineſs of ſpeech "peculiar to himſelf, acquaints us, "as it were out of the clouds and "dark receſſes of wiſdom, with "the divine doctrine of the ſon of "God."

Such is the character given of the writingsof this great apoſtle and evangeliſt, who was honoured with the endearing title of being the beloved diſciple of the Son of God; a writer ſo profound as to deſerve, by way of eminence the character of *St. John the Divine.*

Saint

Saint PHILIP.

CHAP. I.

The tranſactions of St. Philip, from his birth till the time of Chriſt's aſcenſion.

GAlilee, above all the parts of Paleſtine, was remarkable for the rudeneſs and irreligion of its inhabitants; and hence the Jews thought they could not fix a greater mark of ignominy on our bleſſed Saviour, than by calling him a Galilean. *Search and look*, ſaid the Phariſees, *for out of Galilee ariſeth no prophet.* But this ill-natured reflection was abundantly diſproved by facts, for Jonah was a native of Galilee, and the bleſſed Jeſus himſelf made it the chief ſcene of his miniſtry; and from hence he choſe thoſe excellent perſons on whom he conferred the honour of the apoſtulate, and empowered them to preach the glad tidings of ſalvation to the children of men.

Of this number was St. Philip, a native of Bethſaida, *the city of Andrew and Peter.* He had the honour of being firſt called to be a diſciple of the great Meſſiah, which happened in the following manner: Our bleſſed Saviour, ſoon after his return from the Wilderneſs, where he had been tempted by the devil, met with Andrew and his brother Peter, and after ſome diſcourſe parted from them. The next day, as he was paſſing through Galilee, he found Philip, whom he preſently commanded to follow him, the conſtant form he made uſe of in calling his diſciples, and thoſe that inſeparably attended him. So that the prerogative of being firſt called, evidently belongs to St. Philip, he being the firſt of our Lord's diſciples; for tho' Andrew and St. John were the firſt that came and converſed with the Saviour of the world, yet they immediately returned to their occupation, and were not called till a whole year after.

It may ſeem ſtrange that Philip ſhould at firſt ſight ſo readily comply with our Lord's commands, as he had not yet ſeen any miracle to confirm his divine commiſſion, and prove himſelf the Saviour of the world, nor probably ſo much as heard any tidings of the Meſſiah's appearance. But it cannot be doubted, that notwithſtanding St. Philip was a native of Galilee, yet he was excellently ſkilled in the law and the prophets. Metaphraſtes aſſures us, that he had, from his childhood, been excellently educated; that he frequently read over the books of

Moſes, and attentively conſidered the prophecies relating to the Meſſiah. And hence it is natural to ſuppoſe, that he was fully awakened by the expectations entertained by all the Jews, that the Meſſiah would ſoon appear, as the time of his coming, according to the prophets, was now expired. Add to this, that the command of the Son of God was accompanied with a large meaſure of the divine grace, and we ſhall be convinced, that the perſon who called him, was the expected Meſſiah.

Nor was our apoſtle idle after the honour he had received of being called to attend the Saviour of the world; he immediately imparted the glad tidings of the Meſſiah's appearance to his brother Nathaniel, and conducted him to him. So ready is a good man to conduct others in the paths that lead to happineſs.

After his being called to the apoſtulate, we have very little recorded of him by the evangeliſts. It was however to him that our Saviour propoſed the queſtion, where they ſhould find bread ſufficient to ſatisfy the hunger of ſo great a multitude? To which Philip anſwered, that it was not eaſy to procure ſo large a quantity; not conſidering, that it was equally eaſy for almighty power to feed double the number, when it pleaſed to exert itſelf. It was alſo to the ſame apoſtle, that the Gentile proſelytes, who came up to worſhip at Jeruſalem, applied, when they were deſirous to ſee the Saviour of the world. And it was with him our Lord had the diſcourſe a little before the paſchal ſupper.

The holy and compaſſionate Jeſus had been fortifying their minds with proper conſiderations againſt his departure from them, and had told them that he was going to prepare for them a place in the manſions of the heavenly Canaan; that he was *the way, the truth, and the life*; that *no man could come to the Father but by him*; and that knowing him, *they both knew and had ſeen the Father*. Philip, not thoroughly underſtanding the force of his Maſter's reaſonings, begged of him that he would *ſhew them the Father*. We can hardly ſuppoſe that Philip ſhould have ſuch groſs conceptions of the Deity, as to imagine the Father inveſted with a corporeal and inviſible nature; but Chriſt having told them that they had ſeen him, and knowing that of old God frequently appeared in a viſible ſhape, he only deſired that he would manifeſt himſelf to them by ſome ſuch appearance. Our Lord gently reproved his ignorance, that after attending ſo long to his inſtructions, he ſhould not know, that he was the image of his Father, the expreſs characters of his infinite wiſdom, power, and goodneſs appearing in him; that he ſaid and did nothing but by his Father's appointment; which, if they did not believe, his miracles were a ſufficient evidence: that ſuch demands were therefore unneceſſary and impertinent; and that it was an indication of great weakneſs in him, after three years education under his

diſcipline and inſtitution, to appear ſo ignorant with regard to theſe particulars. And hence we ſhould do well to remember, that God expects improvement according to the opportunities men enjoy. To be old and ignorant in the ſchool of Chriſt deſerves both reproach and puniſhment: it is the character of very bad perſons, that they are ever learning, but never come to the knowledge of the truth.

CHAP. II.

The tranſactions of St. Philip, from the aſcenſion of Chriſt to his martyrdom.

THE ancients tell us, that in the diſtribution made by the apoſtles of the ſeveral regions of the world, the Upper Aſia fell to his ſhare, where he applied himſelf with an indefatigable diligence and induſtry, to turn the children of men from the paths of wickedneſs which lead to deſtruction, to ways that terminate in eternal felicity. And by the conſtancy and power of his preaching, and the efficacy of his miracles, he gained numerous converts, whom he baptized into the chriſtian faith, curing at once their bodies of infirmities and diſtempers, and their ſouls of error and idolatry. He continued with them a conſiderable time in ſettling churches, and appointing them guides and miniſters of religion.

After ſeveral years ſucceſsfully exerciſing his apoſtolical office in all thoſe parts, he came at laſt to Hierapolis in Phrygia, a city remarkably rich and populous, but at the ſame time over-run with the moſt enormous idolatry. Among the many vain and trifling deities, to whom they paid religious adoration, was a ſerpent or dragon, of an enormous magnitude, which they worſhipped with the greateſt and moſt ſolemn veneration.

St. Philip being grieved to ſee the people ſo wretchedly enſlaved by error and ſuperſtition, continually offered his addreſſes to heaven, till by his prayers, and often calling on the name of Chriſt, he procured the death, or, at leaſt, the vaniſhing of this famous and beloved ſerpent. Having thus demoliſhed their deity, he demonſtrated to them how ridiculous and unjuſt it was for them to pay divine honours to ſuch odious creatures; ſhewed them that God alone was to be worſhipped as the great parent of all the world, who, in the beginning, made man after his glorious image, and when fallen from that innocent and happy ſtate, ſent his own ſon into the world to redeem him; that, in order to perform this glorious work, he died on the croſs, and roſe again from the dead, and at the end of the world will come again to raiſe all the ſons of men from the chambers of the duſt, and ſentence them to everlaſting rewards and puniſhments, according to their works. This diſcourſe rouſed them from their lethargy; they were aſhamed of their late idolatry, and great numbers embraced the doctrines of the Goſpel.

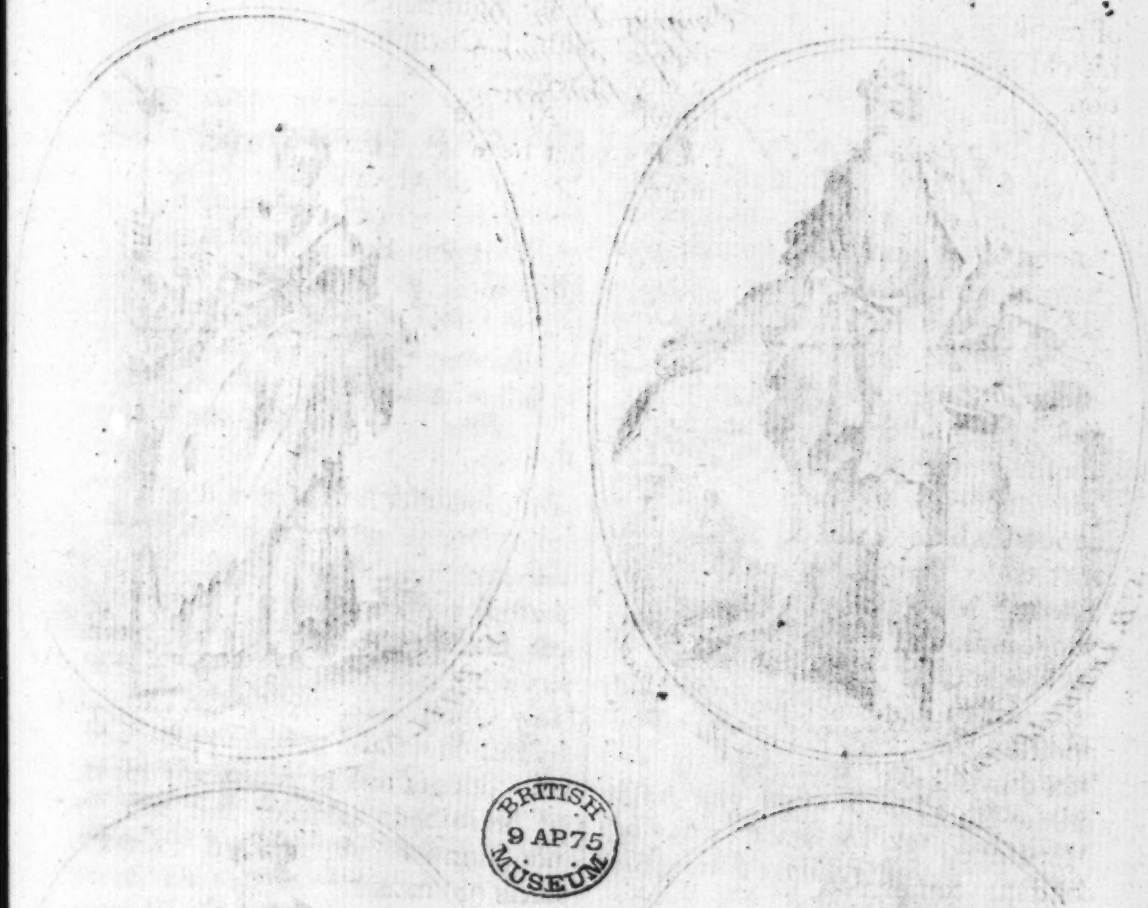
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This provoked the great enemy of mankind, and he had recourſe to his old methods, cruelty and perſecution. The magiſtrates of the city ſeized the apoſtle, and having thrown him into priſon, cauſed him to be ſeverely ſcourged. When this preparatory cruelty was over, he was led to execution, and being bound, was hanged againſt a pillar; or, according to others, crucified. But Omnipotence did not behold this ſcene of cruelty without teſtifying his anger. For when this indefatigable apoſtle was expiring, the earth began ſuddenly to quake, and the ground whereon the people ſtood to ſink under them; but, on their conſidering it as a mark of the divine vengeance, and imploring pardon for their crime, it ſuddenly ſtopt, and returned to its former poſition. The apoſtle being dead, his body was taken down by St. Bartholomew, his fellow-labourer in the goſpel, and Mariamne, St. Philip's ſiſter, the conſtant companion of his travels, and decently buried; after which they confirmed the people in the faith of Chriſt, and departed from them.

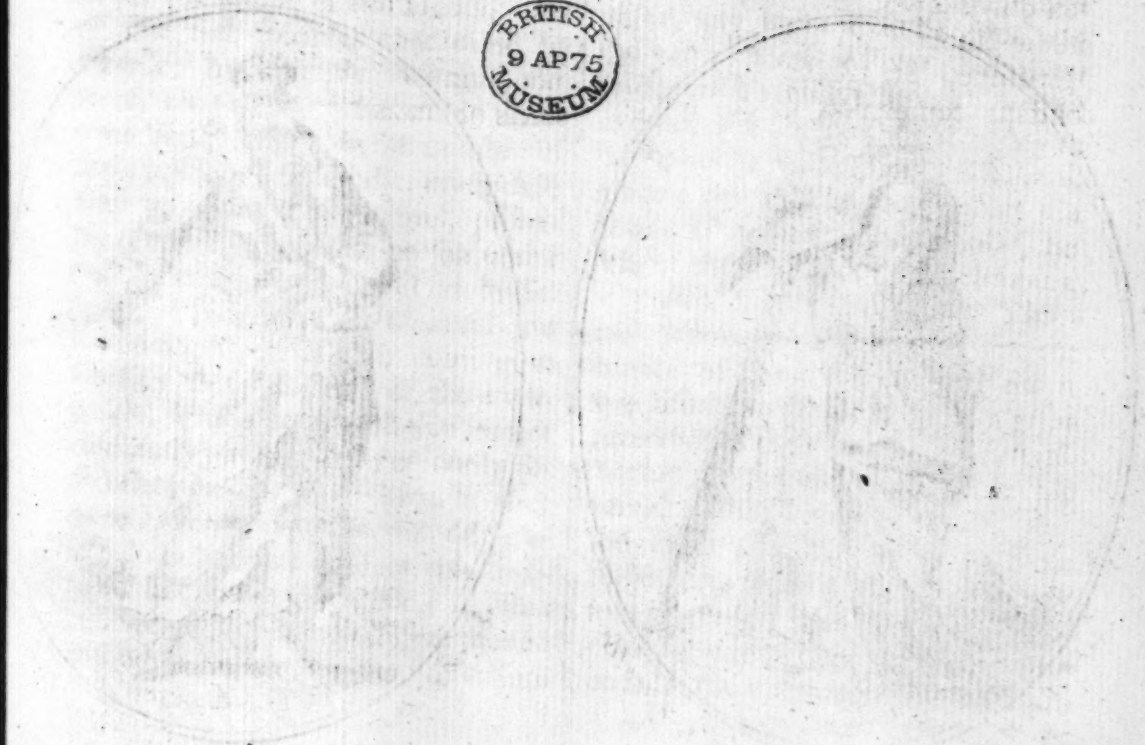
All the ancient writers agree that he was a married man; and Clemens of Alexandria, that he had daughters, whom he diſpoſed of in marriage. But he, not carefully diſtinguiſhing between Philip the deacon, who lived at Ceſarea, with his three virgin daughters, as mentioned in the Acts of the Apoſtles, has cauſed ſome confuſion among the ancient authors. Nay, ſome have concluded, that they were one and the ſame perſon; tho' the one was called to the apoſtleſhip by our Lord himſelf, and the other only a deacon choſen by the apoſtles at Jeruſalem, after the deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt.

St. Philip was one of thoſe apoſtles who left no writings behind him, being fully employed in miniſtries more immediately uſeful to the happineſs of mankind.

Saint



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Engravid for the Life of our Saviour.



St. BARTHOLOMEW. the Apostle



St. PHILIP. the Apostle



St. SIMON. the Apostle



St. JUDE. the Apostle

Saint BARTHOLOMEW.

CHAP. I.

The tranſactions of St. Bartholomew, from his birth to the aſcenſion of his great Maſter.

THE evangelical hiſtory of the election of the apoſtles, expreſsly tells us, that St. Bartholomew was one of the twelve. But becauſe he is but juſt named, without any farther notice taken of him, the generality of writers ancient and modern, ſuppoſe that he lay concealed under the name of Nathanael, one of the firſt diſciples that came to Chriſt. Accordingly, we may obſerve, that as St. John never mentions Bartholomew in the number of the apoſtles; ſo the other evangeliſts take no notice of Nathanael, probably as being the ſame perſon under two different names: and as in St. John, Philip and Nathanael are joined together in their coming to Chriſt; ſo in the reſt of the evangeliſts, Philip and Bartholomew are conſtantly put together; certainly for no other reaſon, than becauſe they were jointly called to the diſcipleſhip. But what renders this opinion ſtill more probable, is, that Nathanael is particularly mentioned among the other apoſtles, to whom our Lord appeared at the ſea of Tiberias after his reſurrection. And it is hard to give a reaſon why Nathanael, *an Iſraelite indeed, in whom was no guile*, and ſo early a diſciple that he was a witneſs of the whole miniſtry, doctrine, and mighty power of the bleſſed Jeſus, ſhould not have been propoſed as well as Barſabas or Matthias to have filled the vacant place of Judas, if he had not been one of the twelve already.

Nor is it reaſonable to ſuppoſe that Bartholomew was his proper name, any more than Bar-jona was the proper name of Peter; but given to denote his relative capacity, either as a ſon or a ſcholar. If it refers to his father he was the ſon of Thalmai, a name not uncommon among the Jews: If to his ſect as a ſcholar, he was of the ſchool of the Tholmæans, ſo called from their founder Thalmai, ſcholar to Heber, the ancient maſter of the Hebrews. Now it was uſual for ſcholars, out of a great reverence to their maſter, or firſt inſtitutor of the order, to adopt his name, as Ben-ezra, Ben-uziel, and the like. But whichever of theſe conjectures appears moſt ſatisfactory to the reader, either will be ſufficient for my purpoſe; namely, to reconcile the difference there ſeems to

be between St. John and the other evangeliſts about the name of this apoſtle, the one calling him by his proper name, and the other by his relative or paternal title.

The only objection againſt this opinion is what was anciently hinted by St. Auguſtine, that it is not probable that our bleſſed Saviour, who propoſed to confound the wiſdom of this world by the preaching of illiterate men, would chuſe Nathanael, a doctor of the law, to be one of his apoſtles. But this objection will appear to be built on a ſandy foundation, if we conſider, that the ſame argument is as ſtrong againſt Philip, of whoſe knowledge in the law and the prophets, there is as ſtrong evidence in the hiſtory of the goſpel as for that of Nathanael; and may be urged with ſtill greater force againſt St. Paul, whoſe abilities in human learning were remarkably great, and few were more complete maſters of the Jewiſh law.

Having removed this difficulty, I ſhall proceed to the hiſtory of this apoſtle, and conſider the names of Nathanael and Bartholomew as belonging to one and the ſame perſon.

With regard to his deſcent and family, ſome are of opinion that he was a Syrian, and that he was deſcended from the Ptolemies of Egypt; probably for no other reaſon than the mere analogy and ſound of the name. But it is plain from the evangelical hiſtory, that he was a Galilean, St. John having expreſsly told us, that Nathanael was of Cana in Galilee.

The ſcripture is ſilent with regard to his trade and manner of life, tho' from ſome circumſtances, there is room to imagine that he was a fiſherman. But however that be, he was, at his firſt coming to Chriſt, conducted by Philip, who told him they had now found the long-expected Meſſiah, ſo often foretold by Moſes and the prophets, *Jeſus of Nazareth the ſon of Joſeph.* And when he objected that the Meſſiah could not be born in Nazareth, Philip deſired him to come and ſatisfy himſelf.

At his approach, our bleſſed Saviour entertained him with this honourable character, that he was *an Iſraelite indeed*, a man of true ſimplicity and dignity, and indeed his ſimplicity particularly appears in this, that when he was told of Jeſus, he did not object againſt the meanneſs of his original, the low condition of his parents, or the narrowneſs of their fortunes, but only againſt the place of his birth, which, as he juſtly obſerved, could not be Nazareth, the ſcriptures peremptorily foretelling, that the Meſſiah ſhould be born at Bethlehem. By this therefore he appeared to be a *true Iſraelite*, one that *waited for redemption in Iſrael*, which from the times mentioned in the ſcripture predictions, he knew to be near at hand.

He was greatly ſurprized at our Lord's ſalutation, wondering how he could know him at firſt ſight, being certain he had never before ſeen his face. But he was anſwered, that he had ſeen him while he was yet under the fig-tree, even before Philip called him. Convinced by this in-

of our Lord's divinity, he preſently made this confeſſion, that he was now ſure that Jeſus was the promiſed Meſſiah, the Son of God, whom he had appointed to govern his church. Our bleſſed Saviour told him, that if from this inſtance he could believe him to be the Meſſiah, he ſhould have far greater arguments to confirm his faith; for that he ſhould hereafter behold the heavens opened to receive him, and the angels viſibly appearing to attend his triumphant entrance into the heavenly Canaan.

CHAP. II.

The tranſactions of St. Bartholomew, from the aſcenſion of Chriſt, to his martyrdom.

SOME time after the viſible deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt on the apoſtles, St. Bartholomew viſited different parts of the world to preach the goſpel, and penetrated as far as the hither India; and Euſebius tells us, that when Patenænus, a perſon famous for his ſkill in philoſophy, but much more for his hearty affection for Chriſtianity, in imitation of the apoſtles, was inflamed with a deſire of propagating the chriſtian religion in the eaſtern parts of the world, he found that ſome of the inhabitants of India ſtill retained the knowledge of Chriſt, and had among them St. Matthew's Goſpel, written in Hebrew, and, according to tradition, left there by St. Bartholomew, when he preached the goſpel in theſe nations.

After ſpending a conſiderable time in India, and the eaſtern extremities of Aſia, he returned to the northern and weſtern parts. And we find him at Hierapolis in Phrygia, labouring in concert with St. Philip to plant Chriſtianity in thoſe parts, and to convince the blind idolaters of the evil of their wars, and direct them in the paths that lead to the regions of felicity. This enraged the bigotted magiſtrates, and he was, together with St. Philip, deſigned for martyrdom; and in order to this faſtened to a croſs; but a ſudden trembling and motion of the earth convinced the idolaters that the juſtice of Omnipotence would revenge their deaths; ſo that they took him immediately down from the croſs and ſet him at liberty.

From hence he retired into Lycaonia, and St. Chryſoſtom aſſures us, that he inſtructed and trained up the inhabitants in the chriſtian diſcipline. His laſt remove was to Albanople in Great Armenia, a place miſerably over-run with idolatry, from which he laboured to reclaim the people. But his endeavour to *turn them from darkneſs unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God* were ſo far from having the deſired effect, that it provoked the magiſtrates, who prevailed on the governor to put him to death, which he cheerfully underwent, ſealing the truth of the doctrine he had preached with his blood.

Some of the ancients tell us that he was crucified with his head downward; and others that he was flead alive. Perhaps he ſuffered both; for

Plutarch records a particular inſtance of Meſobates the Perſian eunuch, who was firſt flead alive, and then crucified; and the inhabitants of Albanople might eaſily borrow this barbarous and inhuman cruelty from the Perſians.

Saint MATTHEW.

CHAP. I.

The tranſactions of St. Matthew, from his birth to the aſcenſion of Chriſt.

ST. Matthew, called alſo Levi, though a Roman officer, was a true Hebrew, and probably a Galilean. Kirſten, an Arabian author, tells us, that he was born at Nazareth, a city in the tribe of Zebulun, famous for the habitation of Joſeph and Mary, and he place where our bleſſed Saviour reſided the whole time of his private life. St. Matthew was the ſon of Alpheus and Mary, ſiſter or kinſwoman to the bleſſed virgin; both originally deſcended from the tribe of Iſſachar.

His trade was that of a publican, or tax-gatherer to the Romans, an office deteſted by the generality of Jews. Among the Romans indeed it was accounted a place of power and credit, and as ſuch rarely conferred on any but Roman knights: and T. Fl. Sabinus father of the emperor Veſpaſian, was the publican of the Aſian provinces, an office which he diſcharged ſo greatly to the ſatisfaction of the public, that they erected ſtatues to him. Theſe officers being ſent into the provinces to gather the tributes, generally employed the natives under them, as perſons beſt ſkilled in the affairs and cuſtoms of their own country.

This office was, on two accounts, odious to the Jews. Firſt, becauſe the perſons who managed it were generally covetous and great exactors; for having themſelves farmed the cuſtoms of the Romans, they uſed every method of oppreſſion, in order to pay their rents to the Romans, and procure an advantage to themſelves. Of this Zaccheus the chief of theſe farmers was very ſenſible after his converſion, when he offered to reſtore fourfold reſtitution to all from whom he had taken any thing by fraud and extortion. And upon this account they became infamous even among the Gentiles themſelves, who commonly mention them as public robbers, and worſe members

members in a community, more voracious and deſtructive in a city than wild beaſts in a foreſt. The other particular which rendered them ſo hateful to the Jews was the tribute they demanded, which they conſidered not only as a burden but alſo as an affront to their nation; for they looked upon themſelves as a free people, having received that privilege immediately from God himſelf; and therefore they conſidered this tribute as a daily and ſtanding inſtance of their ſlavery, which they deteſted above every thing, and it was this that betrayed them into ſo many rebellions againſt the Romans. We may add, that theſe publicans were obliged by their trade to have frequent dealings and converſation with the Gentiles, which the Jews conſidered as an abomination; and though they were themſelves Jews, they rigorouſly exacted the taxes of their brethren, and thereby ſeemed to conſpire with the Romans to entail perpetual ſlavery on their own nation.

Theſe particulars rendered the publicans univerſally abhorred by the Jewiſh nation, ſo that it was reckoned unlawful to aſſiſt them in the common offices of humanity; nay, they aſſerted it was no crime to cheat and over-reach a publican, though they broke the ſolemnity of an oath; they might not eat or drink, converſe or travel with them: they were conſidered as common thieves and robbers, and the money received of them was not permitted to be depoſited with others, conſidering it as gained by rapine and violence; they were not admitted to give teſtimony in any court of juſtice: they were looked upon as ſo infamous, that they were not only baniſhed from all communion in matters of divine worſhip, but ſhunned in all affairs of civil ſociety and commerce, as the peſts of their country, as perſons whoſe converſation was infectious, and not at all better than the heathens themſelves. And hence they had a common proverb among them, "Take not a wife out of that family in which there is a publican, "for they are all publicans." That is, they are all thieves, robbers, and wicked ſinners. And to this proverbial cuſtom our bleſſed Saviour alludes, when ſpeaking of a hardened ſinner, on whom neither private reproofs, nor the public cenſures and admonitions of the church, can prevail, *Let him be to thee as an heathen man and a publican.*

Of this trade and office was the evangeliſt St. Matthew, and he ſeems to have been more particularly employed in collecting the cuſtoms on commodities that came by ſea into Galilee, and the tribute which paſſengers were to pay who went by water. And for this purpoſe the office or cuſtom-houſe ſtood by the ſea-ſide, that the officers might be always at hand; and here it was, as St. Mark intimates, that Matthew ſat at the receipt of cuſtom.

Our bleſſed Saviour having cured a perſon long afflicted with the palſy, retired out of Capernaum, to walk by the ſea-ſide, where he taught the people that flocked after him. Here he ſaw Matthew ſitting in his

office, and called him to follow him. The man was rich, had a large and profitable employment, was a wiſe and prudent perſon, and doubtleſs underſtood what it would coſt him to comply with the call of Jeſus. He was not ignorant that he muſt exchange wealth for poverty, a cuſtom-houſe for a priſon, rich and powerful maſters, for a naked and deſpiſed Saviour. But he overlooked all theſe conſiderations, left all his intereſt and relations, to become our Lord's diſciple, and to embrace a more ſpiritual way of commerce and traffick.

We cannot ſuppoſe that he was before wholly unacquainted with our Saviour's perſon or doctrine, eſpecially as he reſided at Capernaum, where our Lord ſo often preached, and wrought his miracles, by which he muſt, in ſome meaſure be prepared to receive the impreſſions which our Saviour's call made upon him. And to ſhew that he was not diſcontented at his change, he entertained both his maſter and his diſciples at his houſe, calling together his friends, eſpecially thoſe of his own profeſſion, hoping, no doubt, that they might alſo be converted by the company and converſation of our bleſſed Saviour.

The Phariſees, who ſought all opportunities of raiſing objections againſt the doctrine of the bleſſed Jeſus, took this opportunity of ſuggeſting to his diſciples, that it was highly unbecoming ſo pure and holy a perſon, as their maſter pretended himſelf to be, to converſe ſo familiarly with the worſt of men, with publicans and ſinners, perſons infamous to a proverb. But he preſently replied to them, that theſe were the ſick, and therefore needed the phyſician; that his company was of moſt conſequence, where the ſouls of men moſt required it; that God himſelf preferred works of mercy and charity, eſpecially in doing good to the ſouls of men, infinitely above all ritual obſervances; and that the principal deſign of his coming into the world was not to call the righteous, or thoſe who like themſelves vainly pretend to be ſo, but ſinners, modeſt, humble, ſelf-convinced ſinners, to repentance, and to reduce them to a better ſtate and courſe of life.

After St. Matthews's election to the apoſtulate, he continued with the reſt till the aſcenſion of his great and beloved maſter; but the evangelical writers have recorded nothing particular concerning him.

CHAP. II.

The tranſactions of St. Matthew, from the aſcenſion of Chriſt, to his martyrdom.

AFTER our bleſſed Saviour's aſcenſion into heaven, St. Matthew, for the firſt eight years at leaſt, preached in different parts of Judea; but afterward he left the country of Paleſtine to convert the Gentile world. Before his departure, he was intreated by the Jewiſh converts to write the hiſtory of the life and actions of the bleſſed Jeſus, and leave it among them as a ſtanding monument of what he had ſo often deliveved

livered to them in his ſermons. This he readily complied with, as I ſhall more particularly mention in in giving an account of his goſpel.

After his leaving Judea he travelled into ſeveral parts, eſpecially Ethiopia, but the particular places he viſited are not known with any certainty. Metaphraſtes tells us, that he firſt viſited Parthia, and after planting Chriſtianity in thoſe parts, he travelled into Ethiopia; where by his preaching and miracles, he triumphed over ſuperſtition and idolatry, convinced multitudes of the error of their ways, and prevailed on them to obey the precepts of the goſpel; ordained them ſpiritual guides and paſtors to confirm them in the faith, and bring over others to the religon of the Son of God.

After labouring indefatigably in the vineyard of his Maſter, he ſuffered martyrdom at a city of Ethiopia, called Naddabar: but by what kind of death is not abſolutely known; though the general opinion is, that he was ſlain with an halbert.

St. Matthew was a remarkable inſtance of the power of religion, in bringing men to a better temper of mind. If we reflect upon his circumſtances while he continued a ſtranger to the great Redeemer of mankind, we ſhall find that the love of the world had poſſeſſed his heart. He had acquired a plentiful eſtate, was in poſſeſſion of a very rich and profitable trade, ſupported by the power and favour of the Romans, prompted by covetous inclinations, and theſe confirmed by long habits, and cuſtoms. But notwithſtanding all this, no ſooner did Chriſt call him than he abandoned, without the leaſt ſcruple or heſitation, all his riches; nay, he not only renounced his lucrative trade, but ran the greateſt hazard of diſpleaſing the maſters who employed him, for quitting their ſervice without giving him the leaſt notice, and leaving his accounts in confuſion. Had our bleſſed Saviour appeared as a ſecular prince, clothed with temporal power and authority, it would have been no wonder for him to have gone over to his ſervice: but when he appeared under all the circumſtances of meanneſs and diſgrace, when he ſeems to promiſe his followers nothing but miſery and ſufferings in this life, and to propoſe no other rewards than the inviſible encouragements of another world, his change appears truly wonderful and ſurpriſing. It was indeed ſo remarkable, that both Porphyry and Julian, two ſubtle adverſaries of the chriſtian religion, took occaſion from hence to charge him either with falſhood or folly; with the former if he did not give a true account of things; and with the latter, if his caſe was fairly repreſented, in ſo haſtily following the perſon who called him. But theſe detractors would have done well to remember, that the holy Jeſus was no common perſon; his commands were attended with ſomething more than common. St. Jerom is of opinion, that beſides the divinity which evidently appeared in the miracles of the Lamb of God, there was a divine brightneſs and kind of majeſty in his looks, which was at firſt ſight ſuffi-

ſufficient to draw perſons after him. But however that be, his miraculous powers that reflected a luſtre from every quarter, and the efficacy of his doctrine accompanied with the divine grace, made way for the ſummons ſent to our apoſtle, and enabled him to conquer all oppoſitions, and all the difficulties that oppoſed his obeying the commands of his Saviour.

But his contempt of the world ſtill farther appeared in his exemplary temperance and abſtemiouſneſs from all delights and pleaſures; nay even from the ordinary conveniencies and accommodations of it. He was ſo far from indulging his appetite with delicate curioſities, that he refuſed to gratify it with lawful and ordinary proviſions; his uſual diet being only herbs, roots, ſeeds, and berries. But what appeared moſt remarkable in him, and which, tho' the leaſt virtue in itſelf, is the greateſt in the eſteem and value of a wiſe man, was his humility. He was mean and modeſt in his own opinion, always preferring others to himſelf: for whereas the other evangeliſts in deſcribing the apoſtles by pairs, conſtantly place him before St. Thomas, he modeſtly places him before himſelf. The reſt of the evangeliſts are careful to mention the honour of his apoſtleſhip, but ſpeak of his former ſordid, diſhoneſt, and diſgraceful courſe of life, only under the name of Levi; while he himſelf ſets it down with all its circumſtances, under his own proper and common name. A conduct which at once commends the prudence and candour of the apoſtle, and ſuggeſts to us this uſeful reflection, That the greateſt ſinners are not excluded from divine grace; nor can any, if penitent, have juſt reaſon to deſpair, when publicans and ſinners find mercy at the throne of grace. The conduct of the other evangeliſts with regard to St. Matthew, ſhould alſo teach us to uſe a penitent brother with the greateſt modeſty and tenderneſs; it being contrary to the rules of civility, as well as the laws of religion, to upbraid and reproach a perſon, after his repentance, with the errors of his former life.

The laſt thing we ſhall remark in the life of this apoſtle is his goſpel, written at the intreaty of the Jewiſh converts, while he abode in Paleſtine; but at what time is uncertain; ſome will have it to be written eight, ſome fifteen, and ſome thirty years after our Lord's aſcenſion. It was originally written in Hebrew; but ſoon after tranſlated into Greek, by one of the diſciples, probably by St. James the leſs. But whoever the tranſlator was is of no conſequence, becauſe the verſion was well known to the apoſtles and approved by them; and accordingly the church has from the earlieſt ages, received the Greek copy as authentic, and placed it in the ſacred canon.

After the Greek tranſlation was entertained, the Hebrew copy was chiefly owned and uſed by the Nazaræi, a middle ſect between Jews and chriſtians; with the former they adhered to the rites and ceremonies of the Moſaic law, and with the latter they believed in Chriſt, and embraced his religion; and

and hence this goſpel has been ſtyled, *The Goſpel according to the Hebrews*, and *The Goſpel of the Nazarenes*. But after a time it was interpolated by theſe chriſtians, ſeveral paſſages of the evangelical hiſtory which they had heard from the apoſtles, or from thoſe who had familiarly converſed with them, being inſerted; and to theſe additions the ancient fathers frequently refer in their writings. The Ebonites, on the contrary, ſtruck out many paſſages, becauſe they were not favourable to their tenets. A Hebrew copy of St. Matthew's goſpel, but whether exactly the ſame as that written by the apoſtle is uncertain, was found among the other books, in the treaſury of the Jews at Tiberias, by one Joſeph a Jew, and, after his converſion, a man of great honour and eſteem in the reign of Conſtantine. St. Jerom aſſures us, that another was kept in the library at Ceſarea in his time, and another by the Nazarenes at Berea, from whom he procured the liberty to tranſcribe it, and which he afterwads tranſlated both into Greek and Latin, with this remarkable obſervation, that in quoting the text of the Old Teſtament, the evangeliſt immediately follows the Hebrew, without taking notice of the Septuagint tranſlation. A copy of this goſpel was alſo dug up in the year 485 in opening the grave of St. Barnabas in Cyprus, tranſcribed with his own hand. But theſe copies have long ſince periſhed; and with regard to thoſe publiſhed ſince by Tile and Munſter, the barbarous and corrupt ſtile ſufficiently demonſtrate that they were not originals, but the tranſlation of a more ignorant and corrupt age.

Saint THOMAS.

CHAP. I.

The tranſactions of St. Thomas, from his birth to the aſcenſion of our bleſſed Saviour.

IT was cuſtomary for the Jews, when they travelled into foreign countries, or familiarly converſed with the Greeks and Romans, to aſſume a Latin name of the ſame ſignification, or at leaſt that bore ſome affinity with that by which they were known in their own country. Thus our bleſſed Saviour was called *Chriſt*, anſwering to his Hebrew title *Meſſiah*, the anointed. Simon, who was called *Cephas* in Hebrew, was ſtiled *Petros* in Greek, both ſignifying a rock: *Tabitha* was called *Dorcas*, both ſignifying a goat: and thus *Thomas*, according to the Syriac import of his name, was called *Didymus*, both appellations ſignifying a twin.

The evangelical hiſtory is entirely ſilent with regard either to the country or kindred of St. Thomas. It is however certain that he was a Jew, and in all probability a Galilean. Metaphraſtes tells us, that he was deſcended from very mean parents, who brought him up to the trade of fiſhing; but at the ſame time, took care to give him a more uſeful education, inſtructing him in the knowledge of the ſcriptures, whereby he learned wiſely to govern his life and manners.

He was together with the reſt, called to the apoſtleſhip, and not long after gave an eminent inſtance of his being ready to undergo the moſt melancholy fate that might attend him. For when the reſt of the apoſtles diſſuaded their maſter from going into Judea at the time of Lazarus's death, becauſe the Jews lately endeavoured to ſtone him, Thomas deſired them not to hinder his journey thither, tho' it might coſt them all their lives. *Let us go*, ſaid he, *that we may die with him*; concluding that inſtead of Lazarus being raiſed from the dead, they ſhould all, like him, be placed in the chambers of the duſt. So that St. Thomas made up in pious affection what he ſeemed to want in the quickneſs of his apprehenſion, not readily underſtanding ſome of our Lord's diſcourſes, nor over-forward to believe more than what he had ſeen with his own eyes.

When the holy Jeſus a little before his ſufferings had been ſpeaking to them of the joys of heaven, and had told them that he was going to prepare manſions for them, that they might


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might follow him, and that they knew both the place whither he was going, and the way thither; our apoſtle replied, that they knew not whither he was going, much leſs the way that would lead them thither. To which our Lord returned this ſhort but ſatisfactory anſwer, *I am the way*; I am the perſon whom the Father hath ſent into the world to ſhew mankind the paths that lead to eternal life, and therefore you cannot miſs the way if you follow my example.

After the diſciples had ſeen their great Maſter expire on the croſs, their minds were diſtracted by hopes and fears, concerning his reſurrection, about which they were not then fully ſatisfied; which engaged him the ſooner to haſten his appearance, that by the ſenſible manifeſtations of himſelf he might put the matter beyond all poſſibility of diſpute. Accordingly the very day in which he aroſe from the dead, he came into the houſe where they were aſſembled, while for fear of the Jews, the doors were about them cloſe ſhut, and gave them ſufficient aſſurance, that he was riſen from the dead. At this meeting Thomas was abſent, having probably never rejoined their company ſince their diſperſion in the garden, when every one's fears prompted him to conſult his own ſafety. At his return they told him that the Lord had appeared to them, but he obſtinately refuſed to give credit to what they ſaid, or to believe that it was really he, preſuming it rather a ſpectre or apparition, unleſs he might ſee the very print of the nails, and feel the wounds in his hands and ſide. A ſtrange piece of infidelity! Was it any thing more than what Moſes and the prophets had long ſince foretold? Had not our Lord frequently declared in plain terms, that he muſt riſe from the dead the third day? Could they queſtion the poſſibility of what he told them, when they had ſo often ſeen him work the greateſt miracles? Was it reaſonable to reject the teſtimony of ſo many eye-witneſſes, eſpecially as he was well aſſured of their fidelity? or could he think that either themſelves ſhould be deceived, or that they ſhould jeſt and trifle with him on ſo ſolemn and ſerious an occaſion? In ſhort, it was a ſtubbornneſs that might have betrayed him into an eternal infidelity.

But our compaſſionate Saviour would not take the advantage of his perverſe obſtinacy, but on that day ſeven-night came again to them, as they were ſolemnly met at their devotions, and calling to Thomas, bad him look upon his hands, put his fingers into the print of the nails, and thruſt his hand into his ſide, to ſatisfy his faith by a demonſtration from the ſenſes. Thomas was ſoon convinced of his error and obſtinacy, confeſſing that he now acknowledged him to be his Lord and Maſter, a God omnipotent, as he was thus able to reſcue himſelf from the power of death. Our Lord anſwered, that it was happy for him that he believed the teſtimony of his own ſenſes; but that it was a more noble and commendable act of faith, to acquieſce

in a rational evidence, and to receive the doctrines and precepts of the gospel upon such testimonies and assurances as will satisfy a wise and sober man, though he did not behold them himself.

CHAP. II.

The transactions of St. Thomas, from the ascension of the Son of God, to his death.

THE blessed Jesus having left this vale of misery, and bestowed eminent gifts and miraculous powers on the apostles, St. Thomas as well as the rest preached the gospel in several parts of Judea. And after the dispersion of the christian church in Jerusalem, repaired into Parthia the province assigned him for his ministry. After which, as Sempronius and others inform us, he preached the gospel to the Medes, Persians, Carmans, Hyrcani, Bactarians, and the neighbouring nations. During his preaching in Persia, he is said to have met with the magi, or wise men, who had taken that long journey at our Saviour's birth to worship him, whom he baptized, and took with him as his companions and assistants in propagating the gospel.

Leaving Persia he travelled into Ethiopia, preaching the glad tidings of the gospel, healing their sick, and working other miracles, to prove he had his commission from on high. And after travelling through these countries, he entered India.

Nicephorus tells us, that he was at first unwilling to enter these countries, fearing he should find their manners as rude and intractable as their faces were black and deformed, till, encouraged by a vision, wherein he was assured of the divine presence to assist him, he travelled a great way into these eastern countries, and even visited the island Taprobane, since called Sumaira, and the country of the Brachmans, preaching every where with the greatest gentleness, and using the most persuasive discourses, not flying out into invectives against their idolatrous practices, but calmly instructing them in the doctrines of christianity, persuading them by degrees to renounce their follies, well knowing that confirmed habits must be cured by patience and forbearance, by slow and gentle methods; and by these means he reclaimed the people from the grossest errors and superstitions, to an hearty belief and entertainment of the christian religion.

When the Portuguese first visited these countries, after their discovery of a passage by the Cape of Good Hope, they received the following particulars, partly from ancient monuments, and partly from constant and uncontroverted traditions preserved by the christians in those parts: namely, that St. Thomas came first to Socotora, an island in the Arabian sea, and thence to Cranganor, where having converted many from the error of their ways, he travelled farther into the east; and having successfully preached the gospel, returned back to the kingdom of Cormandel, where at Malipur, the metropolis of the kingdom,

dom, not far from the mouth of the Ganges, he began to erect a place for divine worſhip, till prohibited by the idolatrous prieſts and Sagamo, prince of that country. But after performing ſeveral miracles, the work was ſuffered to proceed, and Sagamo himſelf embraced the chriſtian faith, whoſe example was ſoon followed by great numbers of his friends and ſubjects.

This remarkable ſucceſs alarmed the Brachmans, who plainly perceived that their religion would be ſoon extirpated, unleſs ſome method could be found of putting a ſtop to the progreſs of chriſtianity; and therefore reſolved to put the apoſtle to death. At a ſmall diſtance from the city was a tomb, whither St. Thomas often retired for private devotions. Hither the Brachmans and their armed followers purſued him, and while he was intent at prayer, they firſt ſhot at him a ſhower of darts, after which one of the prieſts ran him through with a lance.

His body was taken up by his diſciples, and buried in the church he had lately erected, and which was afterwards improved into a fabric of great magnificence.

Some will have his body to have been afterwards tranſlated to Edeſſa, a city of Meſopotamia; but the chriſtians of the Eaſt affirm, that it always remained in the city near which he ſuffered martyrdom; where it is ſaid to have been afterwards dug up by command of Don Emanuel Frea, governor of the coaſt of Cormandel; and that near it were found the bones of Sagamo, whom he had converted to the chriſtian faith.

While Don Alphonſo Souſa, one of the viceroys of India under John III. king of Portugal, reſided in theſe parts, certain braſs tables were brought to him, whoſe inſcriptions appeared for ſome time intelligible; but at laſt, by the aſſiſtance of a learned Jewiſh antiquarian, they were found to contain a donation made to St. Thomas, whereby the king who then reigned, granted him a piece of ground for building a church. They tell us alſo of a famous croſs found in the chapel of St. Thomas at Malipur, on which was an unintelligible inſcription, till a learned Bramin expounded it to this effect; that Thomas, a divine perſon was ſent into thoſe parts by the Son of God, in the time of Sagamo, to inſtruct the people in the knowledge of the true God; that he built a church and performed aſtoniſhing miracles, till he was ſlain by a Brachman, who thruſt him through with a ſpear, while he was on his knees at prayers; and that the croſs ſtained with his blood, had been left as a memorial of theſe tranſactions. Which interpretation was afterwards confirmed by another learned Bramin, who read the inſcription to the ſame effect.

It is ſaid that there are ſtill chriſtians in India, deſcended from thoſe converted by our apoſtle, thence called chriſtians of St. Thomas. And the Portugueſe at their firſt arrival in theſe parts found them in great numbers in ſeveral places, ſome

ſome ſay fifteen or ſixteen thouſand families. They are verypoor, and their churches generally mean; decorated with no images, nor any other repreſentation, except that of the croſs. They are governed by a high-prieſt, who reſides in the northern parts of the kingdom, who, together with twelve cardinals, two patriarchs, and ſeveral biſhops, directs all ſpiritual affairs; and to him all the chriſtians of the eaſt yield ſubjection. They admit all promiſcuouſly to the holy communion, which they receive under both kinds, though inſtead of wine, which their country does not afford, they uſe a kind of liquor extracted from raiſins ſteeped in water. Children, unleſs in caſe of ſickneſs, are not baptized till the fortieth day. At the death of any friend, the kindred of the deceaſed keep an eight-day feaſt in memory of him. Every Lord's day they have their public aſſemblies for prayer and preaching, and their devotions are performed with great reverence and ſolemnity. Their Bible, at leaſt their New Teſtament, is in the Syriac language, to the ſtudy of which the preachers earneſtly exhort the people. They obſerve the times of Advent and Lent, the feſtivals of our Lord and many of the ſaints, the Sunday after Eaſter in memory of the confeſſion St. Thomas that day made to his great Maſter, after he had been ſenſibly cured of his unbelief. They have a kind of monaſteries of the religious, who live in great abſtinence and chaſtity. Their prieſts are ſhaven in the form of a croſs, have leave to marry once, but denied a ſecond time. No marriages are diſſolved but by death. Theſe rites and cuſtoms they ſolemnly aver to have derived from the very time of St. Thomas, and to have obſerved them with the greateſt care and diligence to this very day.

St. Chryſoſtom ſays, that St. Thomas, who at firſt was the weakeſt and moſt incredulous of all the apoſtles, became, through Chriſt's condeſcenſion to ſatisfy his ſcruples, and the power of the divine grace, the moſt active and invincible of them all; travelling over moſt parts of the world, and living without fear in the midſt of barbarous nations.

Saint

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St. James the Less.

Saint JAMES the Leſs.

IT will be neceſſary before we enter upon the life of this apoſtle, to remove ſome difficulties relating to his perſon. It has been doubted by ſome, whether this was the ſame with that St. James, who was afterwards biſhop of Jeruſalem, two of this name being mentioned in the ſacred writings, namely, St. James the Great, St. James the Leſs, both apoſtles; the ancients mention a third ſirnamed the Juſt, which they will have to be diſtinct from the former, and biſhop of Jeruſalem. But this opinion is built on a ſandy foundation. For nothing is plainer than that St. James the apoſtle, whom St. Paul calls *our Lord's brother*, and reckons with Peter and John, one of the pillars of the church, was the ſame who preſided among the apoſtles, doubtleſs by virtue of his epiſcopal office, and determined the cauſes in the ſynod of Jeruſalem. Nor do either Clemens Alexandrinus or Euſebius mention any more than two, St. James ſlain by Herod, and St. James the Juſt, biſhop of Jeruſalem, whom they expreſsly affirm to be the ſame with him whom St. Paul calls brother of our Lord.

Having removed the difficulties with regard to his perſon, I ſhall proceed to the hiſtory of his life. It is reaſonable to think that he was the ſon of Joſeph, afterwards the huſband of Mary, by his firſt wife, whom St. Jerom ſtiles Eſcha, and adds, that ſhe was the daughter of Aggi, brother to Zaccharias, the father of John the Baptiſt. Hence he was reputed our Lord's brother. We find indeed ſeveral mentioned as the brethren of our Saviour in the evangelical hiſtory; but in what ſenſe was greatly controverted by the ancients. St. Jerom, St. Chryſoſtom, and ſome others, will have them to be called from their being the ſons of Mary, couſin-german, or, according to the Hebrew idiom, ſiſter to the Virgin Mary. But Euſebius, Epiphanius, and many others tell us they were the children of Joſeph by a former wife. And this ſeems moſt natural and beſt agrees with what the Evangeliſt ſays of them, when they enumerate the queſtions of the Jews: *Is not this the carpenter's ſon? Is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren James and Joſes, and Simeon and Judas? and his ſiſters are they not all with us, whence then has this man theſe things?* By which it is plain, that the Jews underſtood theſe perſons not to be

Chriſt's

Chriſt's kinſmen only, but his brethren; the ſame carpenter's ſons having the ſame relation to him, that Jeſus himſelf had. Indeed they had more, Chriſt being only his reputed, they his natural ſons. Upon this account the bleſſed virgin is ſometimes called the mother of James and Joſes; and by this name we frequently find her mentioned by the Evangeliſts in relating our Lord's crucifixion. And tho' ſhe was only mother-in-law to St. James, yet the Evangeliſts might chuſe to ſtile her ſo, becauſe ſhe was commonly called his mother after the death of Joſeph: perhaps ſhe herſelf choſe that title, that the Son of God, whom as a virgin ſhe had brought into the world, might be the better concealed, and leſs expoſed to the envious malice of the Jews. To this it may be added, that Joſephus, who was eminently skilled in matters of genealogy and deſcent, expreſſly ſays, that St. James was the brother of Jeſus Chriſt. There is indeed one objection againſt this, namely, that he is called *the ſon of Alpheus*. But this may mean no more, than either that Joſeph was called by another name, a thing very common among the Jews, or that James himſelf was a diſciple of ſome particular ſect or ſynagogue called Alpheans, there being many ſuch ſects among the Jews about this time.

With regard to the place of his birth, the ſacred hiſtory is ſilent. The Jews in their Talmud call him a man of the town of Sechania; but where that place was ſituated is uncertain. Nor is it known what his particular way or courſe of life was before he was called to the apoſtleſhip; the ſacred writers having been ſilent with regard to this particular, mentioning nothing concerning him during our Saviour's life.

After the reſurrection, he was honoured with a particular appearance of our Lord to him, which, tho' paſſed over in ſilence by the Evangeliſts, is recorded by St. Paul. St. Jerom, from the Hebrew Goſpel of the Nazarenes, which contains ſeveral particulars omitted by the Evangelical hiſtorians, gives the following relation of his appearance to our apoſtle. St. James had ſolemnly ſworn, that from the time he had drank of the cup at the inſtitution of the ſupper, he would eat bread no more, till he ſaw the Lord riſen from the dead. Our Lord therefore being returned from the grave came and appeared to him, commanded bread to be ſet before him, which he took, bleſſed, and brake, and gave to St. James; ſaying, *Eat thy bread, my brother, for the Son of man is truly riſen from among them that ſleep.*

Some time after the reſurrection of our Saviour, he was choſen biſhop of Jeruſalem, preferred before all the reſt for his near relation to Chriſt; and for the ſame reaſon we find Simon choſen to be his immediate ſucceſſor in that ſee, becauſe, after St. James, he was our Lord's next kinſman: a conſideration that made Peter and the two ſons of Zebedee, tho' they had been peculiarly honoured by our Saviour, not to contend for this high and honourable ſtation, but freely choſe James the Juſt biſhop of Jeruſalem. This dignity is indeed

ſaid by ſome of the ancients to have been conferred on him by Chriſt, who conſtituted him biſhop at the time of his appearing to him. But it is ſafeſt to follow the general opinion, that this dignity was conferred upon him by the apoſtles; tho' poſſibly they might receive ſome intimations concerning it from our Lord himſelf.

When St. Paul came to Jeruſalem, after his converſion, he applied to St. James, and was by him honoured with *the right hand of fellowſhip*. And it was to St. James that Peter ſent the news of his miraculous deliverance out of priſon. *Go*, ſaid he, *ſhew theſe things to James and to the brethren*; that is, to the whole church, eſpecially to St. James the paſtor of it.

Our apoſtle was remarkably active in the ſynod of Jeruſalem, when the great cauſe relating to the Moſaick rites was debated: for the cauſe being opened by Peter, and farther debated by Paul and Barnabas, St. James ſtood up to paſs the final and decretory ſentence, That the Gentile converts were not to be loaded with the Jewiſh yoke, a few indifferent rites only being ordered to be obſerved, in order to produce an accommodation between the Jews and Gentiles, uſhering in the expedient with this poſitive concluſion, *This is my ſentence and determination*. A circumſtance the more conſiderable, becauſe ſpoken at a time when Peter was in council, and produced no ſuch intimation of his authority.

He performed every part of his duty with all poſſible care and induſtry, omitting no particular neceſſary to be obſerved by a diligent and faithful guide of ſouls; ſtrengthening the weak, inſtructing the ignorant, reducing the erroneous, reproving the obſtinate; and, by the conſtancy of his ſermons, conquering the ſtubbornneſs of that perverſe and refractory generation he had to deal with, many of the nobler and better ſort being perſuaded to embrace the Chriſtian faith.

But a perſon ſo careful, ſo ſucceſsful in his charge, could not fail of awakening the ſpite and malice of his enemies: a ſort of men of whom the apoſtle has given too true a character, that *they pleaſe not God, and are contrary to all men*. They were vexed to ſee St. Paul had eſcaped their hands by appealing unto Cæſar: malice is as greedy and inſatiable as hell itſelf, and as they could not have their revenge on St. Paul, they turned their fury againſt St. James: but being unable to effect their deſign under the government of Feſtus, they determined to attempt it under the procuratorſhip of Albinus his ſucceſſor, Ananus the younger, of the ſect of the Sadducees, being high prieſt. They were however fearful that Albinus would oppoſe their deſign, and therefore thought it the ſureſt method to diſpatch him, if poſſible, before the new governor arrived.

In order to this a council was ſummoned, and the apoſtle with others arraigned and condemned as violators of the law. But that the action might appear more plauſible and popular, the Scribes and Phariſees, maſters in the art of diſſimulation, endeavoured to enſnare him: and, at their firſt coming, told him, that they had all

placed the greateſt confidence in him; that the whole nation, as well as they, gave him the title of a juſt man, and one that was no reſpecter of perſons; that they therefore deſired he would correct the error and falſe opinion the people had conceived of Jeſus, whom they conſidered as the Meſſiah, and take this opportunity of the univerſal confluence to the paſchal ſolemnity, to ſet them right in their opinions in this particular, and would go with them to the top of the temple, where he might be ſeen and heard by all.

The apoſtle readily conſented, and being advantageouſly placed on a pinnacle of the temple, they addreſſed him in the following manner: "Tell "us, O Juſtus! whom we have all "the reaſon in the world to believe, "that the people are thus generally "led away with the doctrine of Je- "ſus, who was crucified; tell us, "what is this inſtitution of the cru- "cified Jeſus?" To which the apoſtle anſwered, with an audible voice; "Why do you enquire of Jeſus, the "ſon of man? He ſits in heaven at "the right hand of the Majeſty on "high, and will come again in the "clouds of Heaven." The people below hearing this, glorified the bleſſed Jeſus, and openly proclaimed, *Hoſanna to the ſon of David.*

The Scribes and Phariſees now perceived that they had acted fooliſhly; that inſtead of reclaiming, they had confirmed the people in their error; and that there was no way left but to diſpatch him immediately, in order to warn others, by his ſufferings, not to believe in Jeſus of Nazareth. Accordingly they ſuddenly cried out, That Juſtus himſelf was ſeduced and become an impoſtor; and immediately threw him from the pinnacle on which he ſtood, into the court below; but not being killed on the ſpot, he recovered himſelf ſo far as to riſe on his knees, and pray fervently to heaven for his murderers. But malice is too diabolical to be pacified with kindneſs, or ſatisfied with cruelty. Little portions of revenge ſerve only to inflame it, and rouſe it up to greater acts of cruelty. Accordingly his enemies, vexed that they had not fully accompliſhed their work, they poured a ſhower of ſtones upon him, while he was imploring their forgiveneſs at the throne of grace; and one of them, more merciful than the reſt, put an end to his miſery with a fuller's club.

Thus did this great and good man finiſh his courſe in the ninety-ſixth year of his age; and about twenty-four years after our bleſſed Saviour's aſcenſion into heaven. His death was lamented by all good men, even by the ſober and juſt perſons among the Jews themſelves, as Joſephus himſelf confeſſes. He was buried, according to Gregory of Tours, on Mount Olivet, in a tomb he had built for himſelf, and in which he had buried Zacharias and old Simeon. Hejeſippus ſays he was buried in the court of the temple, where he ſuffered martyrdom; and that a monument was there erected to his memory. But the former ſeems more agreeable to reaſon; for the Jews very rarely buried any perſon in the city, much leſs in the courts of the temple; and therefore it is not natural to think they would

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permit that honour to be paid to him they had ſo lately put to death as an impoſtor.

He was a man of exemplary piety and devotion, educated under the ſtricteſt rules and inſtitutions of religion, a prieſt of the ancient order of the Rechabites, or rather, as Epiphanius conjectures, according to the moſt ancient order and form of prieſthood, when the ſacerdotal office was the prerogative of the firſt-born: but whether this kind of prieſthood was at any time obſerved under the Moſaic diſpenſation, we are no where told in ſacred writ. But however that be, it is certain that he had the privilege of entering the ſanctuary, or holy place, when he pleaſed, though none but prieſts of the order of Aaron were permitted to enter there beſides himſelf. Prayer was his conſtant buſineſs and delight; he ſeemed to live upon it, and to have continually his converſation in heaven: and therefore uſed conſtantly to repair into the temple to pray, which he always performed kneeling, and with the greateſt reverence, till by his daily devotions his knees were become hard and callous like thoſe of a camel. And he who has told us, *that the prayer of a righteous man availeth much*, found it ſo by his own experience, heaven lending a more immediate ear to his petitions; ſo that in a time of remarkable drought, on his praying for rain, the clouds melted into fruitful ſhowers.

Nor was his charity towards men leſs than his piety towards God; he did good to all, watched over the ſouls of men, and ſtudied to advance their eternal welfare; his daily errand into the temple was to pray for the happineſs of the people, and that God would not ſeverely reckon with them: he could forgive his moſt inveterate enemies, and *overcome evil with good:* when thrown from the top of the temple, he made uſe of his lateſt breath in ſending up petitions to heaven for the pardon of his murderers, *I beſeech thee, O Almighty Father, forgive them they know not what they do.*

He was of a remarkably meek and humble temper, honouring what was excellent in others, concealing what was valuable in himſelf: neither the eminency of his relation to the bleſſed Jeſus, nor the dignity of the place he ſo worthily filled, could induce him to entertain lofty thoughts of himſelf above the reſt of his brethren; on the contrary, he ſtrived to conceal whatever might place him in a higher rank than the other diſciples of the Lord of glory. Tho' he was brother to the Redeemer of mankind, he ſtiles himſelf only *the ſervant of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*; not ſo much as mentioning his being an apoſtle.

His temperance was admirable, wholly abſtaining from fleſh, drinking neither wine nor ſtrong drink, and never uſing the bath. His holy and mortified mind was contented with the meaneſt accommodations; he went bare-foot, and never wore any other than linen garments. He lived indeed after the ſtricteſt rules of the Nazarite order; and as the mitre he wore on his head evinced his

his prieſthood, which was rather from Melchiſedek than Aaron; ſo his never ſhaving his head, or uſing any ointments, his habit and diet, and the great ſeverity of his life ſhewed him to belong to the Nazarite inſtitution, to which he was conſecrated even from his mother's womb. A man of ſo divine a temper that he was at once the love and wonder of his age; and from the reputation of his holy and religious life, was ſtiled *James the Juſt*. He was indeed the ſafety and happineſs of the nation, which was reckoned to depend upon his prayers and intereſt with heaven, and hence he acquired the title of *Oblias* or *Ozliam*, the *defence and fortreſs of the people*; indicating that when he was no more their caſtles would be diſmantled, and their ſtrength laid level on the ground. And ſo indeed it proved; for a few years after his death, the Roman army broke in upon them, and filled the country with blood and ſlaughter. It is indeed no wonder that the judgments of the Almighty like a flood ſhould come rolling in upon a nation, when the ſluices are plucked up, and Moſes taken away, that ſtood in the gap to oppoſe them:

In ſhort, St. James was the delight of all good men, and in ſo great favour and eſtimation with the people, that they uſed to flock after him, and ſtrive who ſhould touch, if it were only the border of his garment; his very epiſcopal chair, as Euſebius informs us, wherein he uſed to ſit, was carefully preſerved, and had a kind of veneration paid it, even in his time. He was beloved not only by his friends but alſo by his enemies, and the Jews themſelves mention St. James in their Talmud, as a perſon who wrought miracles in the name of Jeſus, his maſter: and the wiſeſt of them conſidered his martyrdom as the principal cauſe of all thoſe miſeries and calamities that ſoon after flowed in upon them. Joſephus in particular reckons the death of St. James, as the action that more immediately rouſed the divine vengeance, and haſtened the univerſal ruin of that nation.

He wrote only one epiſtle, probably not long before his martyrdom, as appears from ſome paſſages in it relating to the near approach of the deſtruction of the Jews. He directed it to the Jewiſh converts, diſperſed up and down thoſe eaſtern countries, to comfort them under their ſufferings, and confirm them againſt error. He ſaw a great degeneracy and declenſion of manners coming on; and that the purity of the chriſtian faith began to be undermined by the doctrines and practices of the Gnoſtics, who, under pretence of zeal for the legal rites, generally mixed themſelves with the Jews; he beheld libertiniſm flowing in apace, and the way to heaven made ſoft and eaſy, men declaiming againſt good works as uſeleſs and unneceſſary; and aſſerting, that a naked belief was ſufficient to ſalvation. Theſe doctrines the apoſtle oppoſes, preſſes the purity, patience, charity, and all the virtues of a good life; and, by undeniable arguments proves, that ſuch a faith alone can juſtify us before God, and open for us the gates of eternal life.

Saint

Saint SIMON the Zealot.

ST. Simon the apoſtle was, as ſome think, one of the four brothers of our Saviour, ſons of Joſeph by his former marriage; though the only proof of it is, that one of theſe was called Simon, to weak an argument to found any on, except a bare conjecture. In the catalogue of the apoſtles, he is ſtiled *Simon the Canaanite*, whence ſome conjecture he was born in Cana of Galilee, and others will have him to have been the bridegroom mentioned by St. John, at whoſe marriage our bleſſed Saviour turned the water into wine. But this word has no relation to his country, or the place of his nativity, being derived from the Hebrew word *knab*, which ſignifies *zeal*, and denote a warm and ſprightly temper. What ſome of the evangeliſts therefore call *Canaanite*, others rendering the Hebrew by the Greek word, ſtile *Zealot*: not from his great zeal, his ardent affection to his maſter, and his deſire of advancing his religion in the world, but from his warm active temper, and zealous forwardneſs in ſome particular ſect of religion before his coming to our Saviour.

In order to underſtand this the better, it will be neceſſary to obſerve, that as there were ſeveral ſects and parties among the Jews, ſo there was one, either a diſtinct ſect, or at leaſt a branch of the Phariſees, called the ſect of the Zealotes. They were remarkable aſſertors of the honour of the law, and the ſtrictneſs and purity of religion, aſſuming a liberty to themſelves of queſtioning notorious offenders, without ſtaying for the ordinary formalities of law; nay, they did not ſcruple, when they thought it neceſſary, to inflict capital puniſhments upon them. Thus when a blaſphemer curſed God by the name of any idol, the zealot who firſt met him had the liberty of killing him, without carrying him before the ſanhedrim. They conſidered themſelves as the ſucceſſors of Phineas, who, in defence of the honour of God, inflicted death on Zimri and Coſbi. An act which was *counted unto him for righteouſneſs unto all poſterity for evermore*; and God was ſo well pleaſed with it, that he made *with him and his ſeed after him the covenant of an everlaſting prieſthood, becauſe he was zealous for his God, and made an attonement for Iſrael.* In imitation of this action of Phineas, the ſect of the Zealotes took upon them to execute puniſhments in extraordinary caſes; and that not only by the connivance, but with the leave both of the rulers and people, till in proceſs of time their zeal degenerated into

all kinds of licentiouſneſs and wild extravagance; and they not only became the peſts of the commonwealth at home, but opened the door for the Romans to break in upon them, to their final and irrevocable ruin. They were continually prompting the people to throw off the Roman yoke, and aſſert their natural liberty, taking care when they had thrown all things into confuſion to make their own advantage of the tumult. Joſephus gives a large account of them, and every where bewails them as the great plague of the nation. He tells us, that they did not ſcruple to rob, and even kill the prime nobility, under pretence of their holding correſpondence with the Romans, and betraying the liberties of their country; openly boaſting that by theſe actions they were benefactors and defenders of the people. They even abrogated the ſucceſſion of ancient families, thruſting obſcure and ignoble perſons into the prieſthood, in order to gain the moſt infamous villains over to their party. And not being content with injuring men, they affronted heaven itſelf, proclaimed defiance to the Almighty, by breaking into, and profaning his ſanctuary.

Many attempts were made, eſpecially by Annas the high-prieſt, to reduce them to order, and oblige them to obſerve the rules of ſobriety; but all were in vain. They continued their violent proceedings, and joining with the Idumeans, committed every kind of outrage. They broke into the ſanctuary, ſlew the prieſts themſelves before the altar, and filled the ſtreets of Jeruſalem with tumults, rapine, and bloody. Nay, when Jeruſalem was cloſely beſieged by the Roman army, they continued their deteſtible proceedings, creating freſh tumults and factions, and were indeed the principal cauſe of the ill ſucceſs of the Jews in that fatal war.

This is a true account of the ſect of the Zealots; but it is not to be ſuppoſed that all the individuals of that ſect were of ſuch abandoned principles; ſome of them were doubtleſs good men, and animated only by a zeal for religion; it ſhould alſo be obſerved that they were not arrived to that height of impiety at the time of our bleſſed Saviour.

But whatever St. Simon was before, we have no reaſon to ſuſpect, but after his converſion he was very zealous for the honour of his maſter, and conſidered all thoſe who were enemies to Chriſt as enemies to himſelf, however near they might be to him in any natural relation. And as he was very exact in all the practical duties of the chriſtian religion, ſo he ſhewed a very ſerious and pious indignation towards thoſe, who profeſſed religion, and a faith in Chriſt with their mouths, but diſhonoured their ſacred profeſſion, by their irregular and vicious lives, as many of the firſt chriſtians really did.

Theodoret tells us that St. Simon the Zealot was of the tribe of Zebulun or Napthali, and that by this particular he was diſtinguiſhed from St. Simon, a relation of our bleſſed Saviour,

viour, and after St. James, biſhop of Jeruſalem, who was of the tribe of Judah. But there are ſtronger reaſons to prove this difference, the authority of Euſebius, who never calls Simon, biſhop of Jeruſalem, an apoſtle, but ſays expreſsly, that the apoſtolic age ended with the death of St. John, whom Simon, biſhop of Jeruſalem, ſurvived.

St. Simon continued in communion with the reſt of the apoſtles and diſciples at Jeruſalem; and at the feaſt of Pentecoſt, received the ſame miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghoſt: ſo that he was qualified with the reſt of his brethren for the apoſtolick office, in propagating the goſpel of the Son of God. And we cannot doubt of his exerciſſing his gifts with the ſame zeal and fidelity, though in what part of the world is uncertain. Some ſay he went into Egypt, Cyrene, and Africa, preaching the goſpel to the inhabitants of thoſe remote and barbarous countries. And others add, that after he had paſt through thoſe burning waſtes, he took ſhip and viſited the frozen regions of the north, preaching the goſpel to the inhabitants of the weſtern parts, and even in Britain itſelf; where, having converted great multitudes, ſuſtained the greateſt hardſhips and perſecutions, was at laſt crucified, and buried in ſome part of Great Britain, but where is unknown.

Saint JUDE.

THIS apoſtle is mentioned by three ſeveral names in the evangelical hiſtory, namely Jude, or Judas, Thaddeus, and Lebbeus. The firſt he had in common with the other Jews, and in honour of one of the twelve patriarchs; the other two might be added to the former, partly to diſtinguiſh him from Judas the Traitor, who had rendered the name odious to the chriſtians, and partly as a commendation of his wiſdom and zeal: for Lebbeus, according to St. Jerom, ſignifies a man of underſtanding, and Thaddeus imports divine fervour; and hence ſome of the fathers call him Zelotes.

He was brother to St. James the Leſs, afterwards biſhop of Jeruſalem, being the ſon of Joſeph, the reputed father of Chriſt, by a former wife. It is not known when, or by what means he became a diſciple of our bleſſed Saviour, nothing being

ſaid of him, till we find him in the catalogue of the twelve apoſtles; nor afterwards till Chriſt's laſt ſupper, when diſcourſing with them about his departure, and comforting them with a promiſe, that he would return to them again, meaning after his reſurrection, and that the *world ſhould ſee him no more, though they ſhould ſee him*, our apoſtle ſaid to his maſter, *Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifeſt thyſelf to us, and not unto the world?* It ſeems from this queſtion, that St. Jude expected that the Meſſiah would eſtabliſh a ſecular kingdom; and therefore could not reconcile the ſolemnity and grandeur of it, with the private manifeſtations of Chriſt to his diſciples only. But the anſwer ſatisfied him that the world was not capable of theſe divine manifeſtations, the glorious appearing of the Meſſiah, as having rejected both him and his doctrine, and therefore for the future his intimate converſe, and ſpecial acts of grace and favour, ſhould be reſtrained only to thoſe who made worthy returns, by acts of mutual love to him, and regard to his precepts.

St. Jerom will have, that it was St. Jude the apoſtle whom St. Thomas ſent, ſoon after our Lord's aſcenſion to Edeſſa, to heal Abagarus. But this is a miſtake, it being Thaddeus one of the ſeventy diſciples, and not Judas Thaddeus the apoſtle, who was ſent to Abagarus, as we ſhall ſhew in the life of that diſciple.

Paulinus tells us, that the province which fell to the ſhare of St. Jude in the apoſtolic diviſion of the provinces, was Libya, but he does not tell us whether it wat the Cyrenean Lybia, which is thought to have received the goſpel from St. Mark, or the more ſouthern part of Africa. But however that be, in his firſt ſetting out to preach the goſpel, he travelled up and down Judea and Galilee; then through Samaria into Idumea, and to the cities of Arabia and the neighbouring countries, and afterwards to Syria and Meſopotamia. Nicephorus adds, that he came at laſt to Edeſſa, where Abagarus governed, and where Thaddeus one of the ſeventy had already ſown the ſeeds of the Goſpel. Here he perfected what the other had begun; and having by his ſermons and miracles eſtabliſhed the religion of Jeſus, he died in peace; but others ſay that he was ſlain at Berytes, and honourably buried there. The writers of the Latin church are unanimous in declaring, that he travelled into Perſia, where, after great ſucceſs in his apoſtolical miniſtry for many years, he was at laſt, for his free and open reproving the ſuperſtitious rites and cuſtoms of the Magi, cruelly put to death.

It is evident from Euſebius, that St. Jude was a married man, for he mentions two of his grandſons of whom Hegeſippus gives the following account. The emperor Domitian during the perſecution he raiſed againſt the chriſtians about the year of Chriſt 91, commanded that if any of the poſterity of David and kindred of Chriſt, were ſtill alive, they ſhould be put to death, as having a dangerous

dangerous title to the government. Accordingly, the two grandſons of St. Jude were brought before him, and upon examination owned, with great boldneſs and ſincerity that they were deſcendants from the houſe of David, but at the ſame time perſons of very narrow fortunes; having only a few acres of land, which they cultivated themſelves, and out of the profits of it paid his tribute, and maintained themſelves and families: adding, that the hardneſs of their hands was a ſufficient proof that they were no ſtrangers to labour and toil. He then aſked them concerning the Meſſiah and the ſtate of his kingdom, what kind of empire it was, and when and where it would commence. To which they anſwered, that though the Meſſiah was indeed a king, yet it was not on earth but in heaven; and that his kingdom would not appear till the end of the world, when he would come in the clouds of heaven and reward every man according to his works. Theſe anſwers ſatisfied Domitian, who, obſerving the meanneſs and ſimplicity of the men, ſet them at liberty as perſons beneath his fears and jealouſies. Tertullian adds, that he immediately put an end to the perſecution he had raiſed againſt the chriſtians; and that the grandſons of St. Jude were afterwards chiefs and governors in the church, and lived till the reign of Trajan.

St. Jude left only one epiſtle, which is placed the laſt of thoſe ſeven, ſtiled catholic, in the ſacred canon. It hath no particular inſcription as the other ſix have, but is thought to have been primarily intended for the chriſtian Jews, in their ſeveral diſperſions, as St. Peter's epiſtles were. In it he tells them, "That he at "firſt intended to write to them in "general of the common ſalvation, "and eſtabliſh and confirm them in "it: but ſeeing the doctrine of "Chriſt attacked on every ſide by "hereticks, he conceived it more ne-"ceſſary to ſpend his time in ex-"horting them to fight manfully in "defence of the *faith once delivered* "*to the ſaints*, and oppoſe the falſe "teachers who laboured ſo indefa-"tigably to corrupt it."

The hereticks meant in this epiſtle were the Nicolatians, the Gnoſtics, the followers of Simon Magus, and others of the ſame kind, whoſe morals were as corrupt as their doctrine, truſting to a faith without works as ſufficient to their ſalvation. So that the ſubject of St. Jude's epiſtle is nearly the ſame with that of the ſecond of St. Peter, whoſe ſenſe he generally follows, and often uſes the very ſame expreſſions: only as the infection had ſpread itſelf farther, and had gotten more ground, he ſeems to oppoſe thoſe hereticks with more zeal and ſharpneſs than St. Peter had done. But becauſe true chriſtian charity, though it be zealous, yet is without bitterneſs and hatred, he exhorts the chriſtians to uſe gentle methods, with thoſe deluded people, and *to pluck them as brands out of the fire*; meaning by fire their impious principles and practices, which, if continued in, would certainly conſume them. He ſeems expreſsly to cite St. Peter's ſecond epiſtle,

epiſtle, and to intimate plainly that moſt of the apoſtles were dead. So that his epiſtle ſeems not to have been written till after Nero's reign and the deſtruction of Jeruſalem.

It was ſometime before this epiſtle was generally received in the church. The author indeed, like St. James, St. John, and ſometimes St. Paul himſelf, does not call himſelf an apoſtle, ſtiling himſelf only *the ſervant of Chriſt*. But he has added what is equivalent, *Jude the brother of James*, a character that can belong to none but our apoſtle. And ſurely the humility of a follower of Jeſus ſhould be no objection againſt his writings.

But one great objection againſt this epiſtle was the apoſtle's mentioning the tradition of *Michael the archangel contending with the devil about the body of Moſes*, but he has done no more than St. Paul in naming Jannes and Jambres; namely, alledging a ſtory which was then current and acknowledged by the Jews, though nothing of it was inſerted in the ſacred writings; ſo that St. Jude reaſons with the Jews from their own authors and conceſſions.

His alledging the prophecy of Enoch, is arguing in a ſimilar manner, by reciting and referring to ſome known and common tradition then current among them. To this purpoſe the Hebrew author of the book entitled *Sepher Jeſher* ſpeaks of Enoch in a ſimilar manner. Thus St. Jude in both theſe inſtances uſes their own teſtimonies againſt themſelves. As if he had ſaid, *Theſe men ſpeak evil of dignities*; whereas they have a ſtory current among them, that even Michael the archangel did not ſpeak evil of the devil, when he was ſtriving with him about the body of Moſes. And though they ſhew and own a prophecy of Enoch concerning God's coming to judgment, they diſpute this very tenet.

Thus have I obviated the difficulties that have ariſen concerning the Epiſtle of St. Jude, and Euſebius tells us, that in his time moſt churches read it publickly: it is indeed evident, that before the cloſe of the fourth age it was acknowledged as canonical ſcripture by general conſent in the councils of Laodicea and Carthage.

Saint

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Engraved for the
Life of our Saviour.
St. Matthias
the Apostle.

Saint MATTHIAS.

AS St. Matthias was not an apoſtle of the firſt election, immediately called and choſen of the Son of God himſelf, it cannot be expected, that any account of him can be found in the evangelical hiſtory. He was one of our Lord's diſciples, probably one of the ſeventy, that had attended on him the whole time of his public miniſtry, and after his death was elected into the apoſtulate, to ſupply the place of Judas, who, after betraying his great Lord and Maſter, laid violent hands on himſelf; vainly hoping to find a a ſanctuary in the grave, and meet with that eaſe in another world, he was denied in this. How dreadful are the ſtings of a guilty conſcience! The ſecret arts of wickedneſs may indeed for a while prevent the ſtroke, but every affliction, or petty accident will awaken it into horror, and rouſe this internal vicegerent of the Almighty, like an armed man!

The defection of Judas having made a vacancy in the apoſtolic college, the firſt thing they did after their return from mount Olivet, when their great Maſter aſcended to the throne of his glory, was to fill up this vacancy with a proper perſon. Accordingly Peter acquainted them that Judas, according to the prophetical prediction, being fallen from his miniſtry, it was neceſſary that another ſhould be ſubſtituted in his room, and at the ſame time requiſite that the perſon elected ſhould have been a conſtant attendant on the bleſſed Jeſus, that he might be the better qualified for bearing witneſs to his life, death, reſurrection, and aſcenſion.

After this ſpeech of St. Peter, two perſons were propoſed, Joſeph called Barſabas, and Matthias, both duly qualified for the important office. The method of election was by lots, a way common both among the Jews and Gentiles for determining doubtful and difficult caſes, eſpecially in chuſing judges or magiſtrates. And this courſe ſeems to have been taken by the apoſtles, becauſe the Holy Ghoſt was not yet given, by whoſe immediate dictates and inſpirations they were afterwards chiefly guided. And that the buſineſs might proceed with the greater alacrity and ſucceſs, they firſt ſolemnly made their addreſſes to heaven, that the omniſcient Being who governed the world, and perfectly underſtood the tempers and diſpoſitions of men, would immediately guide and direct the choice, and ſhew them which of the two he would appoint to take that part of the apoſtolick charge from which Judas was ſo lately fallen. The prayer being ended the lots were drawn, by which it appeared

appeared that Matthias was the perſon, and he was accordingly numbered among the twelve apoſtles.

Not long after this election the promiſed powers of the holy Ghoſt were conferred upon the apoſtles, to qualify them for that great and difficult employment upon which they were ſent, the eſtabliſhing the holy religion of the Son of God among the children of men.

St. Matthias ſpent the firſt years of his miniſtry in Judea, where he reaped a very conſiderable harveſt of ſouls, and then travelled into different parts of the world, to publiſh the glad tidings of ſalvation to people who had never yet heard of a Saviour. But the particular parts he viſited are not certainly known. The Greeks ſuppoſe that he travelled eaſtward: St. Jerom ſays, his principal reſidence was near the influx of the river Apſarus into the haven of Hyſcus in Cappadocia. But the people were remarkably rough and uncivilized, ſo that it is no wonder that he at laſt fell a victim to their ferocity; though this did happen till after he had long indefatigably laboured in the vineyard of his great maſter, and brought over vaſt numbers to the chriſtian religion.

It is uncertain by what kind of death he left the regions of mortality, and ſealed the truth of the goſpel he had ſo aſſiduouſly preached with his blood. Dorotheus ſays he finiſhed his courſe at Sebaſtople, and was buried there near the temple of the ſun. An antient Matyrology reports him to have been ſeized by the Jews, and as as a blaſphemer to have been ſtoned and then beheaded. But the Greek offices, ſupported herein by ſeveral ancient breviaries, tell us that he was crucified. His body is by ſome pretended to be now at Rome, where ſome relicks of it are ſhewn with great veneration; while others contend that it is at Triers in Germany. Bollandus is of opinion, that the body of Matthias, now at Rome, is that of Matthias, who was biſhop of Jeruſalem in the year 120, and whoſe hiſtory they have confounded with that of the apoſtle St. Matthias.

Saint MARK.

ST. Mark, tho' his name ſeems of Roman original, was deſcended from Jewiſh parents, and of the tribe of Levi. Nor was it uncommon among the Jews to change their names on ſome remarkable revolution or accident of life, or when they intended to travel into any of the European provinces of the Roman empire.

The

Engravid for the Life of our Saviour.



S.t MARK the Evangelist.



S.t MATTHEW the Evangelist.

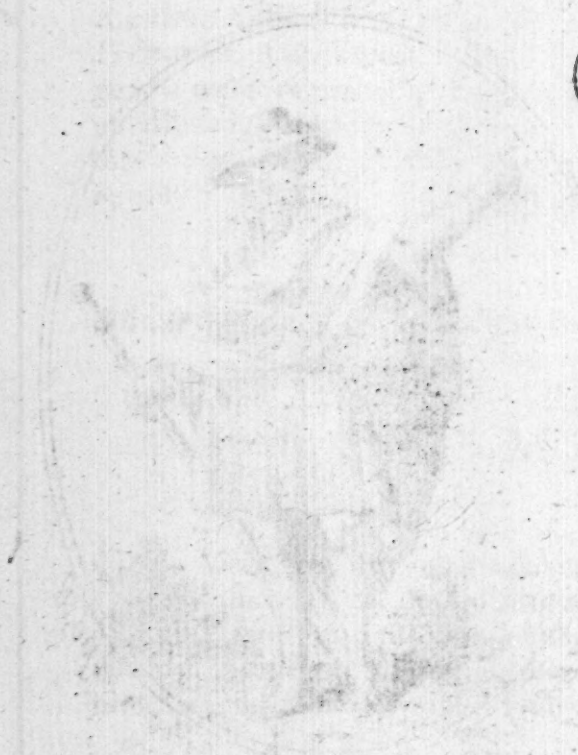


S.t BARNABAS the Apostle.



S.t JAMES the Great the Apostle.





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The ancients generally conſider him as one of the ſeventy diſciples; and Epiphanius expreſsly tells us, that he was one of thoſe who, taking exception at our Lord's diſcourſe of *eating his fleſh and drinking his blood, went back and walked no more with him.* But there appears no manner of foundation for theſe opinions, nor for that of Nicephorus, who will have him to be the ſon of St. Peter's ſiſter. Nay Pepias, biſhop of Hierapolis, who lived near the apoſtolic times, poſitively affirms that he was neither a hearer nor follower of our Saviour. It is therefore moſt probable, that he was converted by ſome of the apoſtles, perhaps by St. Peter, whom he conſtantly attended in his travels, ſupplying the place of an amanuenſis and interpreter. For though the apoſtles were divinely inſpired, and had, among other miraculous powers, the gift of tongues conferred upon them; yet the interpretation of tongues was a gift more peculiar to ſome than to others. And this probably was St. Mark's talent, in expounding St. Peter's diſcourſes whether by word or writing, to thoſe who were ſtrangers to the language in which they were delivered. But however this be, he accompanied him in his apoſtolical progreſs, preached the goſpel in Italy, and at Rome; where, at the requeſt of the chriſtians of thoſe parts, he compoſed and wrote his goſpel.

Euſebius tells that us St Mark was ſent into Egypt by St. Peter to preach the goſpel, and accordingly planted a church in Alexandria the metropolis of it; and his ſucceſs was ſo very remarkable that he converted multitudes both of men and women, perſuading them not only to embrace the chriſtian religion, but alſo a life of more than ordinary ſtrictneſs. That there was indeed a ſect in Egypt remarkably ſtrict in their diſcipline is evident from Philo, who gives the following account of them. "There is, ſays he, a ſort of perſons in many parts of the world, "eſpecially near the Marœotick lake "in Egypt, who have formed themſelves into religious ſocieties, and lead "a ſtrict philoſophical and contemplative courſe of life. When they "firſt enter on this manner of living, they renounce all ſecular in-"tereſts and employments, and leaving their eſtates to their relations "retire into gardens, and places "devoted to ſolitude and contemplation. Their houſes or colleges "are not contiguous, that being free "from noiſe and tumult, they might "the better attend to the deſigns of "a contemplative life; nor yet re-"moved at too great a diſtance, that "they may maintain mutual ſociety, "and be conveniently capable of "helping and aſſiſting one another. "In each of theſe houſes is an ora-"tory, called *Semnion* and *Monaſte-"rion*, in which they diſcharge the "more ſecret and ſolemn rites of "their religion; divided in the "middle by a partition-wall, three "or four cubits high, one apart-"ment being for the men, and the "other for the women. Here they "publickly meet every ſeventh day, "where, being ſeated according to

" their ſeniority, and having com-
" poſed themſelves with great de-
" cency and reverence, the moſt
" aged perſon among them, and
" the beſt ſkilled in the dogmata
" and principles of their inſtitution,
" comes forth into the midſt, grave-
" ly and ſoberly diſcourſing on what
" may make the greateſt impreſſion
" in their minds; the reſt attend-
" ingwith the moſt profound ſilence,
" and only teſtifying their aſſent with
" the motion of their eyes or head.
" Their diſcourſes are commonly
" myſtical and allegorical, ſeeking
" hidden ſenſes under plain words;
" and of ſuch an allegorical philo-
" ſophy the books of their religion
" left them by their anceſtors con-
" ſiſts: the law they compare to
" an animal, the letters of it reſem-
" bling the body, while the ſoul of
" it lies in theſe abſtruſe and recon-
" dite notions, which the external
" veil and ſurface of the words
" conceal from common under-
" ſtandings. With regard to their
" method of living, they take very
" little care of their bodies, ſpend-
" ing their whole time in perfecting
" their minds by precepts of wiſdom
" and religion; the day they wholly
" ſpend in pious and divine medita-
" tions, in reading and expounding
" the law and the prophets, and the
" holy volumes of the ancient foun-
" ders of their ſeat, and in ſinging
" pſalms to the honour of their
" Maker; abſolutely temperate and
" abſtemious, neither eating nor
" drinking till night, the only time
" they think proper to refreſh
" and regard the body; and ſome
" of them, out of an inſatiable de-
" ſire of growing in knowledge and
" virtue, faſt many days together.
" Their diet is plain and ſimple,
" ſufficient only to ſatisfy the calls
" of nature, a little bread, ſalt, and
" and water being their conſtant bill
" of fare. Their clothes are as
" mean as their food, deſigned only
" as a preſent ſecurity againſt cold
" and nakedneſs. Nor is this the caſe
" only of the men, but alſo of the
" pious and devout women that live
" among them; who religiouſly
" obſerve every ſeventh day, and
" eſpecially the preparatory week to
" the great ſolemnity, which they
" keep with all expreſſions of a
" more ſevere abſtinence and de-
" votion."

Theſe excellent perſons, Euſebius affirms to have been chriſtians, converted and brought under ſuch admirable rules and inſtitutions by St. Mark at his coming hither, accommodating all paſſages to the manners and diſcipline of the chriſtians; and is followed by Epiphanius, Jerom, and others. But whoever ſeriouſly and impartially conſiders Philo's account will plainly find that he intends it of Jews, and profeſſors of the Moſaic religion, though what particular ſect they were, I ſhall not pretend to determine; perhaps they were Eſſenes. But however that be, it is plain they were not chriſtians, for Philo ſpeaks of them as an inſtitution of ſome ſtanding; whereas the chriſtians had but very lately appeared in the world, eſpecially in Egypt. Beſides, many parts of Philo's account does not in ſeveral parts agree with the ſtate and man-

manners of the chriſtians at that time; as that they withdrew themſelves from publick converſation, and all the affairs of civil life, which the chriſtians never did, but when forced to it by violent perſecutions, for at other times as Juſtin Martyr and Tertullian tell us, they mixed themſelves promiſcuouſly with the inhabitants of the country, dwelt in towns and cities, plowed their lands, and followed their reſpective trades and callings like other men. Nor can the books which Philo tells rhey had, beſides thoſe of Moſes and the prophets, be underſtood of thoſe of the chriſtians; for the writings of the evangeliſts had been very lately publiſhed, and conſequently could not come under the character of ancient authors. Not to mention that ſome of their ceremonies were ſuch as the chriſtians of thoſe days were abſolute ſtrangers to, not being introduced into the church till ſeveral years, and ſome of them not till ſome ages after Philo wrote his account. Nay, ſome of them were never uſed by the primitive chriſtians, eſpecially their religious dances, which Philo particularly deſcribes, as uſed by them at their feſtival ſolemnities, eſpecially that remarkable one which they obſerved at the end of every ſeven weeks; when their entertainment being ended, they all roſe up, the men in one company and the women in another, dancing with various meaſures and motions, each company ſinging divine hymns and ſongs, and having a precentor going before each diviſion, ſinging alternately; till in the concluſion, they joined in one common chorus, in imitation of the triumphant ſong ſung by Moſes and the Iſraelites, after their great deliverance at the Red-ſea.

Hence, and ſeveral other particulars that might be mentioned it will appear, that theſe could not be chriſtians. It is not indeed to be doubted, but that perſons educated under ſuch excellent rules and methods of life were more than ordinarily prepared for the reception of Chriſtianity, and could not fail of rendering St. Mark's ſucceſs ſurpriſing in thoſe parts, and open a path for men to come in multitudes to embrace the doctrines of the goſpel.

St. Mark did not confine himſelf to Alexandria, and the oriental parts of Egypt, but removed weſtwards to Lybia, paſſing through the countries of Marmarcia, Pentapolis, and others adjacent, where though the people were both barbarous in their manners and idolatrous in their worſhip, yet by his preaching and miracles he prevailed on them to embrace the tenets of the goſpel; nor did he leave them till he had confirmed them in the faith.

After this long tour he returned to Alexandria, where he preached with the greateſt freedom, ordered and diſpoſed of the affairs of the church, and wiſely provided for a ſucceſſion by conſtituting governors and paſtors of it. But the reſtleſs enemy of the ſouls of men would not ſuffer our apoſtle to continue in peace and quietneſs. For while he was aſſiduouſly labouring in the vineyard of his maſter, the idolatrous inhabitants about the time of Eaſter, when they

were celebrating the ſolemnities of Serapis, tumultuouſly entered the church, forced St. Mark, then performing divine ſervice, from thence; and binding his feet with cords, dragged him through the ſtreets, and over the moſt craggy places to the Bucelus, a precipice near the ſea, leaving him there in a loneſome priſon, for that night; but his great and beloved Maſter appeared to him in a viſion, comforting and encouraging his ſoul, under the ruins of his ſhattered body. The next morning early the tragedy began a-freſh, dragging him about in the ſame cruel and barbarous manner, till he expired. But their malice did not end with his death; they burnt his mangled body, after they had ſo inhumanly deprived it of life: but the chriſtians after the helliſh tragedy was over, gathered up his bones and aſhes, and decently interred them near the place where he uſed to preach. His remains were afterwards, with great pomp, removed from Alexandria to Venice, where they are religiouſly honoured, and he adopted as the titular ſaint and patron of that ſtate.

He ſuffered martyrdom on the 25th of April, but the year is not abſolutely known; the moſt probable opinion however is, that it happened about the end of Nero's reign.

St. Mark, as to his perſon was of a middle ſize and ſtature, his noſe long, his eye-brows turning back, his eyes graceful and amiable, his head bald, his beard thick and grey, his gait quick, and the conſtitution of his body ſtrong and healthful.

His goſpel, the only writing he left behind him, was, as I have before obſerved, written at the intreaty and earneſt deſire of the converts at Rome, who not content to have heard St. Peter preach, preſſed St. Mark his diſciple, to commit to writing an hiſtorical account of what he had delivered to them, which he performed with equal faithfulneſs and brevity, and being peruſed and approved by St. Peter, was commanded to be publickly read in their aſſemblies. It was frequently ſtiled St. Peter's goſpel, not becauſe he dictated it to St. Mark, but becauſe the latter compoſed it from the accounts St. Peter uſually delivered in his diſcourſes to the people. And this is probably the reaſon of what St. Chryſoſtom obſerves, that in his ſtile and manner of expreſſion he delights to imitate St. Peter, repreſenting a great deal in a few words. The remarkable impartiality he obſerved in all his relations is plain from hence, that he is ſo far from concealing the ſhameful lapſe and denial of Peter, his dear tutor and maſter, that he deſcribes it with more aggravating circumſtances than any of the other evangeliſts. The Venetians pretend to have the original Greek copy of St. Mark's goſpel, written with his own hand. But this manuſcript, if wrote by St. Mark, is now uſeleſs, the very letters being by length of time, rendered illegible.

Saint

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St. LUKE,
the Evangelist.

Saint LUKE.

ST. Luke hath had the ſame fate with St. Mark to be repreſented as one of thoſe diſciples who deſerted our Lord on occaſion of his diſcourſe concerning his fleſh and blood, and that he was afterwards recovered by St. Paul; alſo that he was one of thoſe two diſciples to whom our Lord preſented himſelf on the day of his reſurrection, as they were travelling from Jeruſalem to Emmaus: which ſome are ſo far from allowing, that they affirm he never ſaw our Lord, and found their aſſertion in his own words at the beginning of his goſpel. But the learned Dr. Whitby obſerves, that thoſe words in St. Luke, which mention his receiving the facts concerning our Lord from thoſe *who were eye and ear witneſſes* of them, are ſo far from giving any ground to this aſſertion, that they fairly plead for St. Luke's perſonal knowledge of all the things written in his goſpel, even from firſt to laſt.

He was born at Antioch, the metropolis of Syria, a city celebrated for the pleaſantneſs of its ſituation, the fertility of its ſoil, the riches of its commerce, the wiſdom of its ſenate, and the civility and politeneſs of its inhabitants, by the pens of ſome of the greateſt orators of thoſe times. It was eminent for ſchools of learning, which produced the moſt renowned maſters in the arts and ſciences. So that being born, as it were, in the lap of the muſes, he could not well fail of acquiring an ingenious and liberal education. But he was not contented with the learning of his own country: he travelled for improvement into ſeveral parts of Greece and Egypt, and became particularly ſkilled in phyſick, which he made his profeſſion. But they who would from this particular infer the quality of his birth and fortune, ſeem to forget that the healing art was in theſe early times generally practiſed by ſervants; and hence Grotius is of opinion, that St. Luke was carried to Rome, and lived there a ſervant to ſome noble family in quality of phyſician: but after obtaining his freedom he returned into his own country, and probably continued his profeſſion till his death, it being ſo highly conſiſtent with, and in many caſes ſubſervient to the care of ſouls.

He is alſo famous for his ſkill in another art, namely, painting, and an ancient inſcription found in a vault near the church of St. Maria de Via Lata at Rome, ſuppoſed to have been the place where St. Paul dwelt, which mentions a picture of the bleſſed Vir-

gin, UNAEA vii. AB LUCA DEPICTIS, *being one of the ſeven painted by St. Luke.*

St. Luke was a Jewiſh proſelyte; but when he became a chriſtian is uncertain. Thoſe who underſtand him in the beginning of his goſpel to ſay that he had the facts from the reports of others, who were eye-witneſſes, ſuppoſe him to have been converted by St. Paul; and that he learned the hiſtory of his goſpel from the converſation of that apoſtle, and wrote it under his direction; and that when St. Paul, in one of his epiſtles, ſays *according to* my *goſpel*, he means this of St Luke, which he ſtiles *his* from the great ſhare he had in the compoſition of it.

On the other hand, thoſe who hold that he wrote his goſpel from his own perſonal knowledge, obſerve, that he could not receive it from St. Paul, as an eye-witneſs of the matters contained in it; becauſe all thoſe matters were tranſacted before his converſion; and that he never ſaw our Lord before he appeared to him in his journey to Damaſcus, which was ſome time after he aſcended into heaven. Conſequently, when St. Paul ſays, *according to my goſpel*, he means no more than that goſpel in general which he preached; the whole preaching of the apoſtles being ſtiled the goſpel.

They farther obſerve, that it is not probable that St Luke was converted by St Paul, becauſe the latter would in that caſe have ſtiled him his ſon; it being the conſtant practice of the apoſtles to call all eminent converts by that appellation; but he mentions him by the name of *Luke the beloved phyſician.* They therefore ſuppoſe that he ſtudied the law in one of the ſchools of Jeruſalem, where he was converted by our lord, and was one of the ſeventy diſciples.

But however this be, St. Luke became the inſeparable companion of St. Paul in all his travels, and his conſtant fellow-labourer in the work of the miniſtry. He followed him in all his dangers, was with him at his ſeveral arraignments at Jeruſalem, accompanied him in his tedious and dangerous voyage to Rome, where he ſtill attended on him, to adminiſter to him in his neceſſities, and ſupply thoſe miniſterial offices which the apoſtle's confinement would not ſuffer him to undertake; and eſpecially in carrying meſſages to other churches, where he had planted the chriſtian religion. This infinitely endeared him to St. Paul, who ſeemed delighted with owning him for his fellow-labourer, and in calling him *The beloved phyſician*, and the *brother whoſe praiſe is in the goſpel.*

In all probability he did not leave St. Paul till he had finiſhed his courſe, and received the crown of martyrdom; though ſome tell us that he left St. Paul at Rome, and returned back into the eaſt, travelling into Egypt and ſeveral parts of Libya, where he preached the goſpel, wrought miracles, converted multitudes, and conſtituted guides and miniſters of religion; nay, that he himſelf undertook the epiſcopal charge of the city of Thebais. Epiphanius tells us that he firſt preached in Dalmatia aud Galatia, then in Italy and Macedonia

nia, where he ſpared no pains, declined no dangers, that he might faithfully diſcharge the truſt committed to him.

The ancients are not very well agreed either about the time or manner of his death; ſome affirming him to die in Egypt, others in Greece, the Roman Matyrology in Bythinia, and Dorothæus at Epheſus; ſome will have that he died a natural, and others a violent death. Indeed neither Euſebius not St. Jerom take any notice of it; but Gregory Nazianzen, Paulinus, biſhop of Nola, and ſeveral others expreſly aſſert, that he ſuffered mârtyrdom; and Nicephorus gives us this particular account of it, That coming into Greece, he ſucceſsfully preached the goſpel, and baptized many converts into the chriſtian faith; till, at laſt, a party of infidels oppoſed his doctrines: but, being unable to ſilence him by reaſon and argument, they had recourſe to cruelty, dragged him from the place where he was teaching the goſpel, and hung him on an olive tree, in the eightieth, or according to St. Jerom, in the eighty-fourth year of his age. Kirſtenius thinks, he ſuffered martyrdom at Rome ſoon after St. Paul's firſt impriſonment; becauſe he did not continue his acts of the apoſtles any farther; which it is natural to think he would have done had he lived any conſiderable time after St Paul's departure. His body was afterwards, by the command of Conſtantine, or his ſon Conſtantius, removed, with great ſolemnity to Conſtantinople, and buried in the great church, erected to the memory of the apoſtles.

He wrote two books for the uſe of the church, his goſpel and the acts of the apoſtles; both which he dedicated to Theophilus, which many of the ancients ſuppoſe to be a feigned name, denoting a lover of God, a title common to all ſincere chriſtians. But others think it waa a real perſon, becauſe the title of *moſt excellent* is attributed to him; the uſual title and form of addreſs in thoſe times to princes and great men. Probably he was ſome magiſtrate, whom St. Luke had converted and baptized; andto whom he dedicated theſe books, not only as a teſtimony of honourable reſpect, but alſo as a means of giving him farther certainty and aſſurance of thoſe things wherein he had inſtructed him.

His Goſpel contains the principal tranſactions of our Lord's life; and the particulars omitted by him are, in general, of leſs importance than thoſe of the other evangeliſts.

With regard to the acts of the apoſtles written by St. Luke, the work was no doubt performed at Rome, about the time of St Paul's impriſonment there, with which he concludes his ſtory. It contains the actions, and ſometimes the ſufferings of the principal apoſtles, eſpecially St. Paul, whoſe activity in the cauſe of Chriſt made him bear a greater part in the labours of his maſter; and St. Luke being his conſtant attendant, an eyewitneſs of the whole carriage of his life, and privy to his moſt intimate tranſactions, was conſequently capable of giving a more full and ſatisfactory account of them. Among other things he enumerates the great

miracles the apoſtles did in confirmation of their doctrine.

In both theſe treatiſes his manner of writing is exact and accurate; his ſtile nobe and elegant, ſublime and lofty, and yet clear and perſpicuous, flowing with an eaſy and natural grace and ſweetneſs, admirably adapted to an hiſtorical deſign. In ſhort as an hiſtorian, he was faithful in his relations, and elegant in his writings; as a miniſter, careful and diligent for the good of ſouls; as a chriſtian devout and pious; and to crown all the reſt, laid down his life in teſtimony of that goſpel he had both preached and publiſhed to the world.

Saint THADDEUS.

ST. Thaddeus is generally ſuppoſed to have been the brother of St. Thomas, and one of our ſaviour's ſeventy diſciples: he is not mentioned particularly in the evangelical hiſtory, but in common with the reſt of the ſeventy conſtantly attended the diſcourſes, and was an eye-witneſs of the miracles of his great maſter, the ſon of the living God.

Soon after the aſcenſion of the great Redeemer of mankind, Thaddeus was ſent by Jeruſalem for Edeſſa, to heal king Abagarus, and convert him and his people to the Chriſtian faith.

Abagarus, or Abgarus, king of Edeſſa, was afflicted with a very grievous diſeaſe, for which he could find no remedy; and while he lay in this condition, he was informed of the miraculous cures which were performed by Jeſus Chriſt in Judea. Upon this he ſent a courier to him, whoſe name was Ananias, with a letter drawn up in theſe terms: Abagarus, king of Edeſſa, to Jeſus the merciful ſaviour of mankind, who has appeared cloathed with human fleſh in the country of Jeruſalem, with health.

"I have been made acquainted "with the prodigies and cures "wrought by you, without the uſe "of herbs or medicines; and by the "efficacy of your words I am told "that you make criples and the "maimed to walk; that you force "devils from the bodies of them poſ-"ſeſſed; that there is no diſeaſe "however incurable it may ſeem to "be, which you do not heal; and "that you reſtore the dead to life. "Theſe wonders perſuade me that "you are ſome God deſcended from "heaven; that you are the ſon of "God. For this reaſon I have ta-"ken the liberty to write this letter

"to

" to you, beſeeching you to come and " ſee me, and cure me of the indiſ- " poſition under which I have ſo long " laboured. I underſtand that the " Jews perſecute you, murmur at " your miracles, and ſeek your de- " ſtruction. I have here a beautiful " and agreeable city, which, tho' it " be not very large, will be ſufficient " to ſupply you with every thing that " ſhall be neceſſary."

Jeſus Chriſt returned him an anſwer in theſe terms:

" You are very happy, Abagarus, " thus to have believed in me with- " out having ſeen me; for it is writ- " ten of me, that they who ſhall " ſee me will not believe in me; and " that they who have never ſeen me, " ſhall believe and be ſaved. As " to the deſire you expreſs of receiv- " ing a viſit from me, I muſt tell you " that all things for which I am " come muſt be fulfilled in the " country where I am. When this " is done, I muſt return to him who " ſent me; and when I am departed " hence, I will ſend one of my diſ- " ciples to you, who ſhall cure you " of the diſeaſe which you complain " of, and give life to you and thoſe " that are with you."

Euſebius ſays, in his Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory, that he took theſe letters out of the records of Edeſſa; and he adds, that St. Thomas, after the reſurrection of our Saviour, ſent Thaddeus, one of the ſeventy diſciples, and very different from the apoſtle of that name, to preach Jeſus Chriſt in that city, and heal king Abagarus. Thaddeus went thither, converted the king and all his people, wrought an infinite number of miracles among them, and recovered the king's health. Some believe that beſides the letter we have been ſpeaking of, our Saviour ſent his picture to him printed on an handkerchief. But the generality of critics, particularly father Alexander, Meſſ. Du Pin, and De Tillemont, reject this whole ſtory; and look upon the two letters which we have mentioned as pieces without any authority.

King Abagarus, or Abgarus, according to D' Herbelot, was ſo called becauſe he was lame; we therefore ſhould not give him the name of Agbar, as if it was derived from the Arabic *Akbar*, which ſignifies great. The city of Edeſſa, where he reigned, goes generally by the name of Orfa in Diarbeck, a province of Aſiatic Turkey. It is a common tradition among the eaſtern people, both Chriſtians and Mahometans, that this prince wrote a letter to our Saviour, and received an anſwer from him, together with a handkerchief which had the impreſſion of our Saviour's face upon it. This we are told by Mr D' Herbelot, in his oriental library: which however does not deſtroy what we have ſaid of Abagarus; nor is it ſufficient to confirm the authenticity and truth of Abagarus's pretended letter to Jeſus Chriſt, and our Saviour's reply to Abagarus. The eaſtern people are generally not very exact in matters of hiſtory; and their traditions are not always to be depended upon. Edeſſa, which ſome have placed upon the Euphrates, was at the diſtance of a day's journey from it. The river upon which it is ſitu-

ated is the Scyrtus, the overflowings whereof are dangerous and frequent. In the reign of the emperor Juſtin, it was entirely ruined by inundations. The emperor built it again and gave it the name of Juſtinopolis: but afterwards it was called Orfa. There were kings of Edeſſa before the reign of Auguſtus; and they generally bore the name of Abagarus. Mr. Vaillant has preſerved a ſucceſſion of theſe kings, who from the firſt century were all chriſtians.

It is ſomething ſurpriſing that they ſhould all go by the name of Abagarus, which ſignifies, as Mr d' Herbelot ſays, *lame*. It is much more credible that they aſſumed the name of Akbar, which ſignifies *great*; and that he who wrote to Jeſus Chriſt was nicknamed Abgar, inſtead of Akbar, by reaſon of his infirmity; if however that tradition of the eaſtern people be not an impoſition upon us.

The many difficulties which are alledged by Mr. Baſnage, in his continuation of Joſephus's hiſtory, in order to deſtroy Euſebius's ſtory, and the truth of our Saviour's letter to Abagarus, and that of Abagarus to our Saviour, are without doubt very ſolid. But ſhould they oblige us to reject both this hiſtory and the letters we are ſpeaking of, might it not be ſufficient to conclude from hence that the truth of the matter has been in ſome degree altered, and the letters corrupted? To me it ſeems out of all diſpute, that a certain king of Edeſſa was converted in the earlieſt ages of Chriſtianity by one of the ſeventy diſciples; and that after his example the whole city embraced the ſame faith. With regard to the circumſtances, people, if they pleaſe, may look upon them as no more than embelliſhments and popular traditions ill put together: that the letters as they are at preſent are apocryphal and without authority; but does it follow that there never were any genuine and authentic; and that the whole is only a fraud invented with a deſign to delude the world?

Procopius relates, in his Perſian war, that Abagarus, king of Edeſſa, who had contributed to the defeat of Craſſus, was obliged to ſubmit to Auguſtus, who deprived him of the title of king, and left him that only of toparck, or governor of the place; and carried him to Rome, in order to ſecure himſelf of his fidelity. Abagarus, weary of abiding in this great city, bethought himſelf of a little ſtratagem, by which to work upon Auguſtus, and prevail with him to grant permiſſion for his return to Edeſſa. When he was a-hunting, he caught ſeveral wild beaſts alive; and having directed ſome of the earth to be taken up belonging to the holes where each of them had been laid hold of, he appointed it to be ſpread ſeparately in different places of the amphitheatre. Upon letting looſe theſe animals, each went immediately towards the earth belonging to his den. The emperor readily underſtood Abagarus's meaning, and ſent him back to his little kingdom. When he took his leave, he deſired and obtained permiſſion to build a circus at Edeſſa. He died ſome few years after, leaving a ſon behind him very unworthy of him. The ſon hav-

having uſed his ſubjects ill, and fearing he ſhould be puniſhed for ſo doing by the Romans, went over to the Perſians, and embraced that party.

This account we have from Procopius, who affirms that the firſt Abagaruswas the ſame with him who wrote to Jeſus Chriſt; and that a ſecond was his ſon; and both were chriſtians. But this can never be made out; for Jeſus Chriſt did not begin to preach till the fourteenth year of Tiberius, which is the 30th of the vulgar æra, and above eighty years after the defeat of Craſſus: nor could Abagarus believe in Chriſt till after the preaching; nay, not till after the death of our Saviour, which happened in the ſeventeenth year of Tiberius. We have moreover ſome medals ſtruck at Edeſſa, in which this emperor is called *the God of the Edeſſenians* (*Sebaſtos Theos toon Edeſſeoon.*) They therefore were not at that time converted to Chriſtianity.

According to Procopius's recital, it ſhould ſeem that the prince who treated his ſubjects ſo ill as to be obliged to fly for ſafety to the Perſians, was he who believed in Jeſus Chriſt, and brought over his whole people to the faith. Euſebius places this converſion in the year 340, which anſwers to the twenty-ninth of Jeſus Chriſt, obſerving the æra of the Edeſſenians; which is the ſame with that of the Seleucidæ, who began it at the death of Alexander the Great. But in the twenty-ninth year of our Saviour, Abagarus could not as yet have had any knowledge of the bleſſed Jeſus, who did not enter upon the buſineſs of preaching till the year following. We had better read with Rufinus, the year 343, which anſwers to the year of Chriſt's death, according to the vulgar æra.

It is not known what Thaddeus did after his time, becauſe he has not been well diſtinguiſhed from St. Jude. The Latins honour one St Thaddeus on the eleventh of May, whom they ſeem to make a martyr in Aſia: and the Greeks remember him on the twenty firſt of Auguſt. They ſay that he died in peace at Berytus, in Phœnicia, after baptizing many perſons in that city.

Saint BARNABAS.

ST. Barnabas was at firſt called Joſes, a ſofter termination generally given by the Greeks to Joſeph. His fellow-diſciples added the name of Barnabas, as ſignificant of ſome extraordinary property in him. St. Luke interprets it, *the ſon of conſolation*, which he was ever ready to adminiſter

miniſter to the afflicted, both by word and action; as his comfortable diſcourſes, his ſelling his own eſtate, and collecting the benevolence of others, for the relief of the poor indigent chriſtians, abundantly teſtify. St. Jerom obſerves that his name alſo denotes, *the ſon of a prophet*; and in this reſpect likewiſe it was well ſuited to our apoſtle, as being eminent for his prophetick gifts and endowments.

He was a deſcendant of the tribe of Levi, of a family removed out of Judea, and ſettled in the iſle of Cyprus, where they had purchaſed an eſtate, as the Levites might do out of their country. His parents finding their ſon of a promiſing genius and diſpoſition, placed him in one of the ſchools of Jeruſalem, under the tuition of Gamaliel, St. Paul's maſter; an accident which, in all probability, laid the firſt foundation for that intimacy which afterwards ſubſiſted between theſe two eminent ſervants of the bleſſed Jeſus.

The ancients tell us, that St. Barnabas being a frequent ſpectator of our Saviour's miracles, particularly of his curing the paralytic at the pool of Bethesda, he became his conſtant follower, and brought him to his ſiſter Mary's houſe, where he uſed afterwards to aſſemble with his diſciples. They add, that his ſon Mark was the young man who bore the pitcher of water, and whom our Lord commanded his two diſciples to follow home, and there prepare for them to eat the paſſover. However, Clemens Alexandrinus, Euſebius, Epiphanius, and other ancients poſitively affirm, that he was one of the ſeventy diſciples; and perhaps the Greeks may not be in the wrong, who ſay he was one of the firſt and chief of them.

The firſt mention we find of St. Barnabas in the holy ſcripture is the record of that great and worthy ſervice he did the church of Chriſt, by ſuccouring it with the ſale of his patrimony in Cyprus, the whole price of which he laid at the apoſtle's feet, to be put into the common ſtock, and diſpoſed of as they ſhould think fit among the indigent followers of the holy Jeſus. This worthy example was followed by thoſe who were bleſſed with the goods of fortune; none kept their plenty to themſelves, but turned their houſes and lands into money, and devoted it to the common uſe of the church. St. Barnabas is indeed mentioned as ſelling the moſt valuable eſtate on this occaſion; or being the moſt forward and ready to begin a common ſtock, and ſet others a laudable pattern of charity and benevolence.

And now St. Barnabas became conſiderable in the miniſtry and government of the church; for we find that St. Paul coming to Jeruſalem three years after his converſion, and not readily procuring admittance into the church, becauſe he had been ſo grievous a perſecutor of it, and might ſtill be ſuſpected of a deſign to betray it, he addreſſed himſelf to Barnabas as a leading man among the chriſtians, and one that had perſonal knowledge of him. He accordingly introduced him to Peter and James, and ſatisfied them of the ſin-

ſincerity of his converſion, and in what a miraculous manner it was brought about. This recommendation carried ſo much weight with it, that Paul was not only received into the communion of the apoſtles, but taken into Peter's houſe, *and abode with him fifteen days*, 1 Gal. i. 18.

About four or five years after this, the agreeable news was brought to Jeruſalem, that ſeveral of their body who had been driven out of Judea by the perſecutions raiſed about St. Stephen, had preached at Antioch with ſuch ſucceſs, that a great number, both of Jews and proſelytes, embraced Chriſtianity; and were deſirous that ſome of the ſuperior order would come down and confirm them. This requeſt was immediately granted; and Barnabas was deputed to ſettle this new plantation. Upon his arrival, he rejoiced extremely, to ſee what progreſs the goſpel had made among them; and earneſtly exhorted them to continue immoveable in their profeſſion of Chriſt Jeſus. And being himſelf *a good man, and full of the Holy Ghoſt, and of faith*, his charitable deeds accompanying his diſcourſes, and his pious life exemplifying his ſound doctrine, the people were greatly influenced by him, and very large additions were made to the chriſtian church. But there being too large a field for one labourer, he went to fetch Saul from Tarſus, who came back with him to Antioch, and aſſiſted him a whole year in eſtabliſhing that church. Their labours proſpered; their aſſemblies were crouded, and the diſciples, who before this were called among themſelves *brethren, believers, elect*, and by their enemies *Nazarenes*, and *Galileans, were now called Chriſtians firſt in Antioch.*

During the preaching of theſe apoſtles in Antioch, Agabus, a prophet, gave the church notice that there would ſhortly be a great famine throughout the world, or more properly throughout the Roman empire; eſpecially in Judea. On hearing this prophecy, the chriſtians of Antioch conſidering the number and neceſſities of their brethren at Jeruſalem, and how generouſly the rich among them had exhauſted their eſtates in maintaining the poor, determined to ſend them aſſiſtance againſt the enſuing ſcarcity; which they raiſed by contributions according to every man's abilities, and ſent it to the heads of the church at Jeruſalem, by the hands of Barnabas and Paul. This famine lay heavy on Judea, during the four year's government of Caſpius Fadus, and Tiberius Alexander, preſidents of that province, under the emperor Claudius.

When the apoſtles had fulfilled their charitable embaſſy, and ſtaid ſome time at Jeruſalem to ſee the good effect of it, they returned again to Antioch, bringing with them John, whoſe firname was Mark, the ſon of Mary, ſiſter to Barnabas; and at whoſe houſe the diſciples found both ſecurity for their perſons, and conveniency for the ſolemnities of their worſhip. But ſoon after the apoſtles return to Antioch, an expreſs revelation was made to the

church, by the mouth of one of the prophets who miniſtered there, that Barnabas and Saul ſhould be ſet apart for an extraordinary work, unto which the Holy Ghoſt had appointed them. Upon this declaration, the church ſet apart a day for a ſolemn miſſion; and after devout prayer and faſting, they laid their hands upon them, and ordained them to their office; which was to travel over certain countries, and preach the goſpel to the Gentiles. From this joint commiſſion, Barnabas obtained the name of an apoſtle, not only among later writers of the church, but with St. Paul himſelf, and with St. Luke, in the hiſtory of the acts of the apoſtles.

Paul and Barnabas being thus conſecrated *the apoſtles of the Gentiles*, entered upon their province, taking with them John Mark for their miniſter or deacon, who aſſiſted them in many eccleſiaſtical offices, particularly in taking care of the poor.

The firſt city they viſited after their departure from Antioch was Selucia, a city of Syria adjoining to the ſea; from whence they ſailed for the iſland of Cyprus, the native place of St. Barnabas, and arrived at Salamis, a port formerly remarkable for its trade. Here they boldly preached the doctrines of the goſpel, in the ſynagogue of the Jews; and from thence travelled to Paphos, the capital of the iſland, and famous for a temple dedicated to Venus, the titular goddeſs of Cyprus. Here their preaching was attended with remarkable ſucceſs; Servius Paulus, the proconſul, being, among others, converted to the chriſtian faith.

Leaving Cyprus, they croſſed the ſea to preach in Pamphylia, where their deacon John, to the great grief of his uncle Barnabas, left them, and returned to Jeruſalem; either tired with continual travels, or diſcouraged at the unavoidable dangers and difficulties which experience had ſufficiently informed him would conſtantly attend the preachers of the goſpel, from hardened Jews and idolatrous Gentiles.

The apoſtles did not continue long at Perga, but travelled ſeventy or eighty miles northward to Antioch, in Piſidia, ſo called to diſtinguiſh it from Antioch in Syria, where the apoſtles received their ordination. Here they preached to the Jews in their ſynagogue; but meeting with blaſphemous oppoſition, they told them plainly, that they thought it reaſonable to preach the goſpel firſt to them: but as they had ſo unthankfully rejected it, they would now make the ſame offers of ſalvation to the Gentiles, according to the commandment of God, by his prophets. But the exaſperated Jews ſtirred up ſome of the principal citizens to perſecute them, and force them to leave the city; whereupon they departed from Antioch, and came to Iconium, the metropolis of Licaonia, where they continued a conſiderable time, preaching in the ſynagogues with great ſucceſs. But at laſt the old ſpirit of Jewiſh rage and malice prevailed againſt them, and obliged them, in order to avoid the madneſs of the multitude, to retire to Lyſtra and Derbe, cities of the ſame province.

Soon after their arrival at Lyſtra, Paul cured a man who had been lame

lame from his mother's womb, which ſo aſtoniſhed the inhabitants, that they believed them to be Gods, who had viſited the world in the form of men. Barnabas they treated as Jupiter, their ſovereign deity; either becauſe of his age, or the gravity and comelineſs of his perſon; for all the writers of antiquity repreſent him as a perſon of a venerable aſpect, and a majeſtic preſence. But the apoſtles, with the greateſt humility, declared themſelves to be but mortals: and the unconſtant populace ſoon ſatisfied themſelves of the truth of what they had aſſerted; for, at the perſuaſions of their indefatigable perſecutors, who followed them hither alſo, they made an aſſault upon them, and ſtoned Paul, till they left him for dead. But, ſupported by an inviſible power from on high, he ſoon recovered his ſpirits and ſtrength; and the apoſtles immediately departed for Derbe. Soon after their arrival they againſt applied themſelves to the work of the miniſtry, and converted many to the religion of the bleſſed Jeſus.

From Derbe they returned back to Lyſtra, Iconium, and Antioch, in Piſidia, *confirming the ſouls of the diſciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith; and that we muſt through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.* After a ſhort ſtay, they again viſited the churches of Pamphilia, Perga, and Attalia, where they took ſhip and ſailed to Antioch in Syria, the place from whence they firſt ſet out. Preſently after their arrival, they called the church of this city together, and gave them an account of their travels, and the great ſucceſs with which their preaching in the Gentile world had been attended.

But they had not long continued in this city, before their aſſiſtance was required to compoſe a difference in this church, occaſioned by ſome of the Jewiſh converts, who endeavoured to perſuade the Gentiles, that they were bound to obſerve the law of Moſes, as well as that of Chriſt; and be circumciſed as well as baptized. Barnabas endeavoured to perſuade the zealots from preſſing ſuch unneceſſary obſervations; but all his endeavours proving ineffectual, he was deputed with St Paul and others to the church at Jeruſalem, to ſubmit the queſtion to be determined there in a full aſſembly. During their ſtay at Jeruſalem, Mark, in all probability, reconciled himſelf to his uncle Barnabas, and returned with him and St Paul to Antioch, after they had ſucceeded in their buſineſs at Jeruſalem, and obtained a decree from the ſynod there, that the Gentile converts ſhould not have circumciſion and other Moſaic rites impoſed upon them.

This determination greatly comforted and quieted the minds of the Gentiles, but it did not prevent the bigotted Jews from keeping up a ſeperation from them; and that with ſo much obſtinacy, that when St. Peter ſome time after came to Antioch, he, for fear of offending them, contradicted his former practice, and late ſpeech and vote in the ſynod of Jeruſalem, by refraining from all kind of communion with the Gentiles:

and Barnabas himſelf, ſo great and good a man, was induced, by the authority of his example, to commit the ſame error; though doubtleſs on being reproved by St. Paul, they both took more courage, and walked according to the true liberty and freedom of the goſpel.

Some days after this laſt occurrence, Paul made a propoſal to Barnabas, that they ſhould repeat their late travels among the Gentiles, and ſee how the churches they had planted increaſed in their numbers, and improved in the doctrines they had taught them. Barnabas very readily complied with the motion; but deſired they might take with them his reconciled nephew, John-Mark. This Paul abſolutely refuſed, becauſe in their former voyage Mark had not ſhewn the conſtancy of a faithful miniſter of Chriſt, but conſulted his own eaſe at a dangerous juncture; departed from them without leave at Pamphilia, and returned to Jeruſalem. Barnabas ſtill inſiſted on taking him; and the other continuing as reſolute to oppoſe it, a ſhort debate aroſe, which terminated in a rupture; whereby theſe two holy men, who had for ſeveral years been companions in the miniſtry, and with united endeavours propagated the goſpel of the ſon of God, now took different provinces. Barnabas, with his kinſman, ſailed to his own country, Cyprus; and Paul, accompanied with Silas, travelled to the churches of Syria and Cilicia.

Tho' this ſeparation of the apoſtles might ſeem to reflect on them, with regard to the government of their paſſions, yet the providence of God cauſed this ſeparation to produce great advantages to the church. Their taking ſeveral ways occaſioned the goſpel to be preached in more parts of the world than it otherwiſe would have been in the ſame compaſs of time. And the future ſervice of John-Mark, in the miniſtry, proved ſo faithful and aſſiduous, that St. Paul was perfectly reconciled to him; highly recommended him to the Coloſſians, and afterwards during his impriſonment at Rome, he deſired Timothy to bring Mark with him, as a very uſeful and worthy perſon.

After this ſeparation from St. Paul, the ſacred writers give us no account of St. Barnabas; nor are the eccleſiaſtical writers agreed among themſelves with regard to the actions of our apoſtle after his ſailing for Cyprus. This however ſeems to be certain, that he did not ſpend the whole remainder of his life in that iſland, but viſited different parts of the world, preaching the glad tidings of the goſpel, healing the ſick, and working other miracles among the Gentiles; and after long and painful travels, attended with different degrees of ſucceſs in different places, he returned to Cyprus, his native country, where he ſuffered martyrdom in the following manner: Certain Jews coming from Syria to Salamis, where Barnabas was then preaching the goſpel, were highly exaſperated at his extraordinary ſucceſs, fell upon him as he was diſputing in the ſynagogue, dragged him out, and after the moſt inhuman tortures, ſtoned him

to death. His kinſman, John-Mark, who was a ſpectator of this barbarous action, privately interred his body in a cave; where it remained till the time of the emperor Zeno, in the year of Chriſt 485, when it was diſcovered, with St. Matthew's goſpel in Hebrew, written with his own hand, lying on his breaſt.

There is an epiſtle ſtill extant in Greek bearing this apoſtle's name. The church has not received it into the canon of ſcripture, and for that reaſon both Euſebius and St. Jerom call it apocryphal; but they do not deny its being the work of St Barnabas. Clemens Alexandrinus, and Origen, often quote it as his; and Monardus, who firſt publiſhed the Greek with the old Latin verſion, ſufficiently ſhews, that it is the ſame known to the ancients, becauſe all their quotations are found in it. The ſtyle of it reſembles that of the apoſtolic age; but it appears to have been written ſome time after the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, a period which St. Barnabas may eaſily be ſuppoſed to ſurvive. The beginning of it is wanting, and the inſcription, if it ever had any; but the matter of it evidently ſhews that it was written to ſuch Jews as are mentioned in the fifteenth chapter of the Acts, who having embraced Chriſtianity, ſtill held that the obſervance of the ceremonial law was neceſſary to ſalvation. But this law St Barnabas ſhews to be aboliſhed by the goſpel; and that the cuſtoms of it are of no conſequence to the chriſtians. The latter part contains excellent precepts, delivered under the ſimilitude of two ways; the one of light, the other of darkneſs; the former under the conduct of the angels of God, the latter under the influence of the angels of Satan. The way of light is a ſummary of what the chriſtian is to do, that he may attain eternal happineſs; and the way of darkneſs repreſents thoſe particular ſins and vices which exclude men from the kingdom of heaven. He cloſes the whole with preſſing chriſtians to live in ſuch a manner, while they ſojourn in this vale of miſery, that they may enjoy the pleaſures of the heavenly Canaan to all eternity.

Saint PHILIP, the Deacon.

ST. Philip, one of the ſeven deacons, choſen by the apoſtles ſoon after our Saviour's reſurrection, is ſuppoſed to have been a native of Ceſarea in Galilee; it being certain that his daughters lived in that city.

After the death of St. Stephen, all the chriſtians, except the apoſtles, having left Jeruſalem, and diſperſed themſelves in ſeveral parts, St Stephen went down to preach the goſpel at Samaria, where he wrought many

many miracles, and converted great numbers to the faith. He alſo baptized them; but being only a deacon, could not adminiſter the ſacrament of the Lord's ſupper. He therefore informed the apoſtles at Jeruſalem of his ſucceſs in planting the goſpel of the ſon of God; deſiring they would come down, and lay their hands on them, that they might receive the Holy Ghoſt. Accordingly Peter and John came thither, and the Samaritans received the Holy Ghoſt by their means. Simon Magus had been admitted to baptiſm, among others, by St. Philip: but St. Peter would not lay his hands on him; and rejected, with contempt and execration, the propoſal he made to him of purchaſing with money the power of communicating the Holy Ghoſt.

St. Philip was probably at Samaria when the angel directed him to go towards the ſouth, to the road that leads from Jeruſalem to old Gaza, an ancient city in the route to Egypt. Philip obeyed the ſummons of the heavenly meſſenger, and there met with an Ethiopian eunuch belonginging to Candace, queen of Ethiopia; a perſon highly eſteemed by his miſtreſs, was entruſted with the care of all her revenues, and had been at Jeruſalem, to worſhip the Almighty.

As ſoon as the chariot of this Ethiopian appeared in the ſight of Philip, the angel bid him advance towards the ſtranger. He obeyed, and heard the eunuch reading a paſſage of the prophet Iſaias; upon which, Philip aſked him if he underſtood what he was reading? And the eunuch anſwered, how ſhould I underſtand except ſome perſon ſhould explain it to me? deſiring Philip, that he would come and ſit down by him in the chariot. The paſſage he read was this: *He was led as a ſheep to the ſlaughter; and as a lamb before his ſhearers is dumb, ſo he opened not his mouth.* Having finiſhed the paſſage, the eunuch deſired to know whom the prophet intended. Is it, ſays he, himſelf the prophet here means, or ſome other man? In anſwer to this queſtion, Philip began to inſtruct him concerning the Redeemer of the world, the man Chriſt Jeſus. And having proceeded together for ſome time, they came to a fountain, when the eunuch ſaid to Philip, here is water, what hinders me from being baptized? Philip replied, that if he ſincerely believed with all his heart, he would very readily perform the ceremony. To which the eunuch anſwered, I believe that Jeſus Chriſt is the ſon of God. He then commanded the chariot to ſtop; and they both went down into the water, where Philip baptized the eunuch. The ceremony being performed, and they come up out of the water, the ſpirit of the Lord took away Philip, and the eunuch ſaw him no more; but Philip was found again at Azotus, and preached the goſpel in all the cities through which he paſſed, till he again arrived at Ceſarea, in Paleſtine, about thirty leagues from Azotus.

The eunuch, thus baptized by Philip, is generally ſuppoſed to have been the firſt apoſtle of the Ethiopians; and the Abyſſinians boaſt of hav-

having received the chriſtian faith from him. Some believe he preached the religion of the bleſſed Jeſus in Arabia Fœlix and Taprobana; but this is founded on a ſuppoſition, that queen Candace reigned in Arabia Fœlix. But the moſt prevailing opinion is, that this eunuch belonged to a queen who reigned in the peninſula Meroe, on the ſouth of Egypt. The throne of this country was commonly filled by a woman, and ſeveral of them were called Candace.

But to return to St. Philip. The ſacred writers are ſilent with regard to the actions of St. Philip, after the time of his baptizing the Ethiopian eunuch: but the Greek eccleſiaſtical writers ſay, that he left Paleſtine and travelled to Tralles, in the leſſer Aſia, where he founded a church, of which he was both the biſhop and apoſtle; and where, after long labouring in the vineyard of his maſter, and working many miracles, he ſlept in peace, and was buried in the church he had cauſed to be erected. The Latins ſay that he died in peace at Ceſarea, where he was buried, together with his three daughters, who died ſoon after him. But however this be, the converter of the Samaritans, and the baptizer of the Ethiopian eunuch cannot be ſuppoſed to have ſpent the remainder of his days in indolence: he doubtleſs preached the goſpel of the ſon of God, tho' the ancient writers have not particularly enumerated the places that received the chriſtian religion from his mouth. Nor is this any wonder, when it is conſidered that the firſt profeſſors of the goſpel, and who alone were qualified for tranſmitting ſuch accounts to us, were continually perſecuted, driven from one city to another, often obliged to hide themſelves in dens and caverns of the earth, and generally ſealed the truth of the religion they profeſſed with their own blood. When all this, I ſay, is conſidered, we ſhall not be ſurpriſed at their having no leiſure to write hiſtorical accounts of the travels of the apoſtles; or, if they did write them, that their works were loſt in theſe times of confuſion.

Saint SILAS, or SYLVANUS.

SILAS, or Sylvanaus was, according to St. Luke, a chief man among the brethren, an expreſſion which indicates that he was one of the ſeventy diſciples. But the firſt account we have of him is in the tranſaction relating to the diſpute between the Jewiſh and Chriſtian converts, with regard to the neceſſity of keeping the law of Moſes, when they choſe Paul, Barnabas, Judas, and Silas, to go to Jeruſalem,

to adviſe with the apoſtles concerning this queſtion. And this Silas is believed to be the ſame with him mentioned in the title of the two epiſtles of St Paul to the Theſſalonians.

St. Peter ſent his firſt epiſtle by him from Rome; wherein he ſtiles him *a faithful brother*, and it is natural to think that he was one of thoſe who planted the church in Antioch; becauſe we find him there at the time of the famous diſpute abovementioned, and choſen to be one of the deputies to the apoſtolic college at Jeruſalem.

But however that be, when the diſpute happened between Paul and Barnabas, which terminated in a rupture, Silas joined himſelf to Paul, and became his companion and aſſiſtant in the great work of preaching the goſpel to the Gentiles. They firſt viſited the churches of Syria and Cilicia; from thence they paſſed into Lyconia, Phrygia, and Galatia; and laſtly, they croſſed the ſea, and came into Macedonia. The reader will find in the life of St. Paul a more particular account of theſe travels, the dangers to which the apoſtles were expoſed, and the indignities and perſecutions they ſuffered in preaching the glad tidings of the goſpel to the children of men.

While they were at Philippi, they found a young woman poſſeſſed with an unclean ſpirit, who followed her ſeveral days, till Paul caſt out the evil ſpirit and delivered her from ſo dreadful a plague. This action provoked the maſters of the young woman; for ſhe acquired conſiderable gains by the oracles and predictions the devil pronounced by making uſe of her organs: they therefore ſeized upon Paul and Silas, dragged them before the magiſtrates, and accuſed them of introducing cuſtoms among them, contrary to thoſe of the Romans. This cauſed a great uproar in the city, the people flocked together in a tumultuous manner, and the magiſtrates ordered that Paul and Silas ſhould be ſcourged, and committed to priſon. But during the night there was a great earthquake; the doors of the priſon opened, and the fetters of the priſoners fell off without any human aſſiſtance. The goaler, on ſeeing the priſon doors open, was going to put a period to his life, thinking his priſoners had been fled; but Paul called to him, bidding him do himſelf no harm, for all the priſoners were ſafe. At this the goaler recovered from his terror, was converted to the chriſtian faith, and was baptized with his whole family, as I have related more at large in the life of St. Paul. In the morning the magiſtrates ſent orders to ſet Paul and Silas at liberty; but Paul replied, that Roman citizens were not to be treated in this manner, and that the magiſtrates might come themſelves and fetch them out of the priſon. From theſe words of St. Paul it ſeems natural to think that Silas alſo was a citizen of Rome. Perhaps he was, as well as St. Paul, a native of Tarſus.

Leaving Philippi, they travelled to Theſſalonica and Berea, where they preached the doctrines of the goſpel; and Paul continuing his journey to Athens, ſent Silas thither, though they

they did not meet till they both arrived at Corinth, where St. Paul wrote his two epiſtles to the Theſſalonians.

After this we have no account of Silas, whether he left St Paul, and travelled into different parts preaching the goſpel, or whether he finiſhed his courſe while he was a companion of that great apoſtle is uncertain; none of the ancients having mentioned any farther tranſactions of Silas, except Ædo, who ſays he died in Macedonia; and ſeems to hint that it was by martyrdom.

Some are of opinion, that Silas was one of the two diſciples ſent by John to our bleſſed Saviour, to aſk him that famous queſtion, *Art thou he that ſhould come, or look we for another?* and that the miracles he ſaw our bleſſed Saviour perform, converted him, and he became his conſtant follower.

Saint STEPHEN.

BOTH the ſcriptures and the ancient writers are ſilent with regard to the birth, country, and parents of St. Stephen; and therefore we can only conjecture that he was one of thoſe Helleniſtical Jews that believed on Jeſus the redeemer of mankind. Epiphanius is of opinion that he was one of the ſeventy diſciples; but this is very uncertain. Our bleſſed Saviour appointed his ſeventy diſciples to teach the doctrines, and preach the glad tidings of the goſpel; but it does not appear that St. Stephen and the ſix other firſt deacons, had any particular deſignation before they were choſen for the ſervice of the tables; and therefore St. Stephen could not have been one of our Lord's diſciples, though he might have often followed him and liſtened to his diſcourſes.

The ſeven deacons were choſen in the year 53, and we find St. Stephen always placed at their head, as the chief and moſt worthy; and it is generally believed, that he had been brought up at the feet of Gamaliel. But whoever was his maſter, he was remarkably zealous for the cauſe of religion, and full of the Holy Ghoſt; working many wonderful miracles before the people, and preſſing them with the greateſt earneſtneſs to embrace the doctrines of the goſpel.

This highly provoked the Jews; and ſome of the ſynagogue of the freed men of Cyrenia, Alexandria, and other places, entered into diſpute with him; but being unable to reſiſt the wiſdom and ſpirit by which he ſpake, they ſuborned falſe witneſſes againſt him, to teſtify that they heard him blaſpheme againſt Moſes

and againſt God. Nor did they ſtop here: they ſtirred up the people by their calumnies; ſo that they dragged him before the council of the nation, or great Sanhedrim, where they produced falſe witneſſes againſt him, who depoſed that they had heard him ſpeak againſt the temple, and againſt the law, and affirm that Jeſus of Nazareth would deſtroy the holy place, and aboliſh the law of Moſes. Stephen, ſupported by his own innocence and an inviſible power from on high, appeared undaunted in the midſt of this aſſembly, and his countenance ſhining like that of an angel; when the high-prieſt aſking him what he had to offer againſt the accuſations laid to his charge, he anſwered in the following manner:

"Hearken unto me, ye deſcendants "of Jacob; the Almighty, whoſe "glory is from everlaſting, appeared "to our father Abraham, before he "ſojourned in Charran, even while "he dwelt in Meſopotamia, com-"manding him to leave his country "and relations, and retire into a land "which he would ſhew him.

"Abraham obeyed the divine "mandate; he left the land of the "Chaldeans, and pitched his tent "in Charran; from whence, after "his father was dead, he removed "into Canaan, even the land you "now inhabit; but he gave him no "inheritance in this country, not e-"ven ſo much as to ſet his foot "upon. He promiſed indeed he "would give it him for a poſſeſſion, "which ſhould deſcend to his poſte-"rity, though at this time he had "no child.

"God alſo indicated to him that "his ſeed ſhould ſojourn in a ſtrange "land; the people of which ſhould "make them bondmen, and treat "them cruelly four hundred years. "After which, he would judge that "nation, bring out his people who "ſhould ſerve them in this place; "as an earneſt of which, he gave "him the covenant of circumciſion; "and afterwards a ſon, whom Abra-"ham circumciſed the eighth day, "calling his name Iſaac, who begat "Jacob, and Jacob begat the twelve "patriarchs.

"But theſe, moved with envy, ſold "their brother Joſeph into Egypt, "where the Almighty protected "him, delivered him from all his "afflictions, indued him with wiſ-"dom, and gave him favour in the "ſight of Pharaoh, the monarch of "Egypt, who made him governor "both of his houſe and kingdom.

"Soon after this exaltation of "Joſeph, the countries of Egypt and "Canaan were afflicted with a terri-"ble famine, and our fathers found "no ſuſtenance either for themſelves "or flocks. But as ſoon as Jacob "heard the welcome tidings, that "there was corn in Egypt, he ſent "our fathers thither to purchaſe "bread for the famine of his houſe-"hold. And in their ſecond jour-"ney thither, Joſeph made himſelf "known unto his brethren, and alſo "informed Pharaoh of his country "and relations. After which, Jo-"ſeph's father, with his whole houſe,

" houſe, conſiſting of three ſcore
" and fifteen ſouls, went down into
" Egypt, where both Jacob and our
" fathers died, and were carried to Sy-
" chem, and depoſited in the ſepulchre
" purchaſed by Abraham of the ſons
" of Emmor, the father of Sychem.

" But as the time for fulfilling the
" promiſe made to Abraham ap-
" proached, the people multiplied in
" Egypt, till another king aroſe,
" who was not acquainted with the
" merits of Joſeph, and the great
" things he had done for that coun-
" try. This prince uſed our fathers
" with cruelty, and artfully attempt-
" ed to deſtroy all the male children.
" At this time Moſes was born, and
" being exceeding fair, was nouriſh-
" ed three months in his father's
" houſe: but it being dangerous to
" conceal him there any longer, he
" was hid among the flags on the bank
" of the river; where the daughter
" of Pharaoh found him, and edu-
" cated him as her own ſon.

" Thus Moſes became acquainted
" with all the learning of Egypt, and
" was mighty both in word and
" deed; but when he was forty
" years old he thought proper to vi-
" ſit his brethren, the children of
" Iſrael. And ſeeing an Egyptian
" ſmiting an Hebrew, he aſſiſted the
" ſuffering perſon, and ſlew the E-
" gyptian; ſuppoſing that his bre-
" thren would have been perſuaded
" that from his hand, with the aſſiſt-
" ance of the Almighty, they might
" expect deliverance; but they con-
" ceived no hopes of this kind.

" The next day he again viſited
" them; and ſeeing two of them
" ſtriving together, he endeavoured
" to make them friends: Ye are bre-
" thren, ſaid he to them, why do
" ye injure one another? But he
" who did his neighbour wrong, in-
" ſtead of liſtening to his advice,
" thruſt him away, ſaying, by what
" authority art thou a judge of our
" actions? wilt thou kill me as thou
" didſt the Egyptian yeſterday?

" Moſes, at this anſwer fled from
" Egypt, and ſojourned in the land
" of Median, where he begat two
" ſons. And at the end of forty
" years, the angel of the lord ap-
" peared unto him in the wilderneſs
" of Mount Sinai, out of the midſt
" of a buſh burning with fire: a
" ſight which ſurpriſed Moſes; and
" as he drew near to view more at-
" tentively ſo uncommon a ſight,
" God called unto him, ſaying, *I*
" *am the God of thy fathers, the God*
" *of Abraham, the God of Iſaac, and*
" *the God of Jacob.* At which Mo-
" ſes trembled, and turned aſide his
" face. But the Lord ſaid to him,
" *Put off thy ſhoes from thy feet, for*
" *the place where thou ſtandeſt is holy*
" *ground.* I have long ſeen the af-
" flictions of my people which are
" in Egypt; I have heard their cries,
" and am now deſcended from hea-
" ven to deliver them. Come there-
" fore, I will ſend thee into Egypt.

" Thus was that Moſes whom
" they refuſed, ſent by God to be a
" ruler and deliverer by the hand of
" the angel who appeared to him in
" the buſh. Accordingly, he brought
" them out after he had ſhewed
" ſigns and wonders in the land of
" Egypt, in the Red-ſea, and in the

" wilderneſs, forty years. It is this " Moſes that told our fathers, *A* " *prophet ſhall the Lord your God raiſe* " *up unto you and your brethren, like* " *unto me; him ſhall ye hear.*

" And this prophet is the ſame " who was in the church in the wil- " derneſs, with the angel which " ſpake unto Moſes in Mount Sinai, " and with our fathers: the ſame " who received the lively oracles to " give unto us: he whom our fa- " thers would not obey, but thruſt " him from them, and were deſi- " rous of returning to their ſtate of " bondage; commanding Aaron to " make them Gods to go before them; " and pretending that they knew " not what was become of Moſes, " who delivered them from the " ſlavery of Egypt. They now made " a calf, offered ſacrifices to it, " and rejoiced in the work of their " own hands. On which the Al- " mighty abandoned them to wor- " ſhip the hoſt of heaven, as the " prophets have recorded. *O ye* " *houſe of Iſrael! have you offered un-* " *to me ſlain beaſts and ſacrifices, by* " *the ſpace of forty years in the wil-* " *derneſs? Yea, ye took up the taber-* " *nacle of Moloch, and the ſtar of your* " *God Remphan, figures which ye made* " *to worſhip them: and I will carry* " *you away beyond Babylon.*

" Our fathers were poſſeſſed of " the tabernacle of witneſs in the " wilderneſs; being made accord- " ing to the pattern Moſes had ſeen " in the mount. This tabernacle our " fathers brought in with Jeſus into " the poſſeſſion of the Gentiles, who " were driven out by the Almighty, " till the days of David, a favourite " of the Moſt High, and who was de- " ſirous of finding a tabernacle for " the God of Jacob; but Solomon " built him an houſe.

" We muſt not however, think, " that the Almighty will reſide in " temples made with hands, as the " prophet beautifully obſerved, *Hea-* " *ven is my throne, and earth is my* " *footſtool: what houſe will ye build* " *me, ſaith the lord, or where is the* " *place of my reſt? Hath not mine* " *hand made all theſe things?*

" Ye ſtiffnecked, ye uncircumci- " ſed in heart and ears, ye will for " ever reſiſt the Holy Ghoſt. Ye " tread in the paths of your fathers, " as they did, ſo do you ſtill continue " to do. Did not your fathers per- " ſecute every one of the prophets; " did not they ſlay them who ſhewed " the coming of the Holy One, " whom ye yourſelves have betrayed " and murdered? Ye have received " the law by the depoſition of an- " gels, but never kept it."

At theſe words they were ſo highly enraged, that they all gnaſhed their teeth againſt him. But Stephen lifting up his eyes to heaven, ſaw the glory of God, and Jeſus ſtanding at the right hand of Omnipotence. Upon which, he ſaid to the council, " I ſee the heavens open, " and the ſon of man ſtanding at the " right hand of God." This ſo greatly provoked the Jews, that they cried out with one voice, and ſtopped their ears, as if they had heard ſome dreadful blaſphemy; and falling upon him, they dragged him out of the city, and ſtoned him to death.

death. It was the cuſtom of the Jews, on theſe occaſions, for the witneſſes to throw the firſt ſtone. Whether they obſerved this particular at the martyrdom of Stephen is uncertain: but the evangeliſt tells us that the witneſſes were principally concerned in this action; for they ſtripped off their cloaths, and laid them at the feet of a young man whoſe name was Saul, then a violent perſecutor of the chriſtian church, but afterwards one of the moſt zealous preachers of the goſpel.

Stephen, while they were mangling his body with ſtones, was praying to Omnipotence for their pardon. "Lord, ſaid he, lay not "this ſin to their charge." And then calling on his dear redeemer to receive his ſpirit, he yielded up his ſoul. Some pious perſons who, with the moſt piercing grief beheld the martyrdom of this good man, took care to bury his remains; and the church attended his funeral with great lamentations.

TIMOTHY.

TIMOTHY was both a convert and diſciple of St. Paul. He was born according to ſome at Lyſtra; or, according to others, at Derbe. His father was a Gentile, but his mother a Jeweſs, whoſe name was Eunice, and that of his grandmother Lais.

Theſe particulars are taken notice of, becauſe St. Paul commends their piety, and the good education which they had given Timothy. When St. Paul came to Derbe and Lyſtra about the year of Chriſt 51 or 52, the brethren gave a very advantageous teſtimony of the merit and good diſpoſitions of Timothy; and the apoſtle would have him along with him; but he circumciſed him at Lyſtra, before he received him into his company. Timothy applied himſelf to labour with St. Paul in the buſineſs of the goſpel; and did him very important ſervices, through the whole courſe of his preaching? 'Tis not known when he was made biſhop; but it is believed that he received very early the impoſition of the apoſtle's hands; and that in conſequence of a particular revelation, or order from the Holy Ghoſt. St. Paul calls him not only his dearly

beloved ſon; but alſo his brother, the companion of his labours, and a man of God. He declared that there was none more united with him in heart and mind than Timothy.

This holy diſciple accompanied St. Paul to Macedonia, to Philippi, to Theſſalonica, to Berea; and when the apoſtle went from Berea, he left Timothy and Silas there to confirm the converts. When he came to Athens, he ſent to Timothy to come thither to him. And when he was come, and had given him an account of the churches of Macedonia, St. Paul ſent him back to Theſſalonica, from whence he afterwards returned with Silas, and came to St. Paul at Corinth. There he continued with him, and the apoſtle mentions him with Silas, at the beginning of the two epiſtles, which he then wrote to the Theſſalonians.

Some years after this, St. Paul ſent Timothy and Eraſtus into Macedonia; and gave Timothy orders to call at Corinth, to refreſh the minds of the Corinthians, with regard to the truths which he had inculcated upon them. And ſome time after, writing to the ſame Corinthians, he recommends to them to take care of Timothy, and ſend him back in peace: after which Timothy returned to St. Paul into Aſia, who there ſtaid for him. They went together into Macedonia: and the apoſtle puts Timothy's name with his own, before the ſecond epiſtle to the Corinthians, which he wrote to them from Macedonia, about the middle of the year of Chriſt 57. And he ſends his recommendations to the Romans in the letter which he wrote them from Corinth the ſame year.

Though it does not appear by the Acts, that Timothy was with St. Paul the two years that he was priſoner at Cæſarea, nor during his whole voyage to Rome; yet as Timothy had accompanied him in his journey to Jeruſalem, where he was apprehended, it is likely he followed him alſo to Cæſarea, and thence to Rome: and 'tis certain that he was in this better city at the time the apoſtle wrote to the Philippians, the Coloſſians, and to Philemon; becauſe he is named jointly with him in the titles of theſe three epiſtles, which were written in the years 60, 61, and 62. And the year following, when St. Paul wrote to the Hebrews, he tells them that Timothy was come out of priſon; but he gives us no circumſtances either of the impriſonment or of the delivery of this diſciple.

When St. Paul returned from Rome, in 64, he left Timothy at Epheſus to take care of that church, of which he was the firſt biſhop, as he is recognized by the council of Chalcedon. St. Paul wrote to him from Macedonia, the firſt of the two letters which are addreſſed to him. He recommends to him to be more moderate in his auſterities, and to drink a little wine, becauſe of the weakneſs of his ſtomach, and his frequent infirmities. And after the apoſtle came to Rome in the year 65, being now very near his death, he wrote to him his ſecond letter, which

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is full of the marks of his kindneſs and tenderneſs for this his dear diſciple; and which is juſtly looked upon as the laſt will of St. Paul. He deſires him to come to Rome to him before winter, and bring with him ſeveral things which St. Paul had left at Troas. If Timothy went to Rome, as it is probable he did, he muſt be a witneſs there of the martyrdom of this apoſtle in the year of Chriſt 66.

He returned to Epheſus, probably in the year 67, and continued to govern this church as its biſhop; for St. John the Evangeliſt, who was there at the ſame time, had the care of the churches of all Aſia, by an authority ſuperior to that of a biſhops. The acts of Timothy, of which Photius has tranſmitted an abridgment to us, import, that on the twenty-ſecond of January of the year 97, the Pagans of Epheſus made a great feaſt, at which they carried in proceſſion the images of their Gods, being maſked and armed with clubs; that Timothy ruſhed into the midſt of them to prevent the idolatrous ſuperſtition; but they killed him with ſtones and with their clubs. His diſciples took him from them, and carried him upon a mountain near the city, where he was buried. The Greeks aſſert and ſome of the Latins, put this feaſt on the ſame day, namely, the 22d of January; but the venerable Bede, Raban, Adon and others, place it on the 24th of the ſame month. The antient martyrology, which bears the name of Jerom, mentions him on the 27th of September.

If he did not die before the year 97, we can hardly doubt but that he muſt be the angel of the church of Epheſus, to whom St. John writes in his Revelations: though the reproaches which the Holy Ghoſt make to him, &c. of having left his firſt love, do not ſeem to agree to ſo holy a man as Timothy was. Thus he ſpeaks to him: *I know thy works, and thy labour and thy thy patience, and how thou canſt not bear them which are evil: and thou haſt tried them which ſay they are apoſtles, and are not, and haſt found them liars. And haſt born and haſt patience, and for my name's ſake hath laboured and haſt not fainted. Nevertheleſs, I have ſomewhat againſt thee; becauſe thou haſt left thy firſt love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen; and repent and do thy firſt works: or elſe I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candleſtick out of his place, except thou repent.* The greateſt part of interpreters think, that theſe reproaches do not ſo much concern the perſon of Timothy, as that of ſome member of his church, whoſe zeal was grown cool. But others are perſuaded that they may even be applied to Timothy himſelf, who made ample amends by the martyrdom which he ſuffered for what the Holy Ghoſt reproaches him with in this place. We are not to think that the ſaints are here in an impeccable ſtate, and that their zeal never ſuffers any diminution. 'Tis thought that Timothy had Oneſimus for his ſucceſſor.

TITUS.

TITUS.

TITUS was a Gentile by religion and birth, but converted by St. Paul, who calls him his ſon. St. Jerom ſays, that he was St. Paul's interpreter; and that probably becauſe he might write what St. Paul dictated, or explained in Latin what this Apoſtle ſaid in Greek; or rendered into Greek what St. Paul ſaid in Hebrew or Syriac. St. Paul took him with him to Jeruſalem, when he went thither in the year 51 of the vulgar æra, about deciding the queſtion which was then ſtarted, whether the converted Gentiles ought to be made ſubject to the ceremonies of the law? Some would then have obliged him to circumciſe Titus; but neither he nor Titus would conſent to it. Titus was ſent by the ſame apoſtle to Corinth, upon occaſion of ſome diſputes which then divided the church. He was very well received by the Corinthians, and very much ſatisfied with the ready compliance: but would receive nothing from them, imitating thereby the diſintereſtedneſs of his maſter.

From thence he went to St. Paul into Macedonia, and gave him an account of the ſtate of the church at Corinth. A little while after the apoſtle deſired him to return again to Corinth, to ſet things in order againſt his coming. Titus readily undertook this journey, and departed immediately, carrying with him St. Paul's ſecond Letter to the Corinthians. Titus was made biſhop of the iſle of Crete, about the 63d year of Chriſt, when St. Paul was obliged to quit this iſland, in order to take care of the other churches. The following year he wrote to him to deſire, that as ſoon as he ſhould have ſent Tychicus or Artemas to him for ſupplying his place in Crete. Titus would come to him to Nicopolis in Macedonia, or to Nicopolis in Epirus upon the gulph of Ambracia, where the apoſtle intended to paſs his winter.

The ſubject of this epiſtle is to repreſent to Titus what are the qualities that a biſhop ſhould be endued with. As the principal function which Titus was to exerciſe in the iſle of Crete was to ordain prieſts and biſhops, it was highly incumbent on him to make a diſcreet choice. The apoſtle alſo gives him a ſketch of the advice and inſtructions which he was to propound to all ſorts of perſons; to the aged, both men and women; to young people of each ſex; to ſlaves or ſervants. He exhorts him to keep a ſtrict authority over the Cretans; and to reprove them with ſeverity, as being a people addicted to lying, wickedneſs, idleneſs, and gluttony. And

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as many converted Jews were in the church of Crete, he exhorts Titus to oppoſe their vain traditions and Jewiſh fables; and at the ſame time to ſhew them that the obſervation of the legal ceremonies is no longer neceſſary; that the diſtinction of meats is now aboliſhed; and that every thing is pure and clean to thoſe that are ſo themſelves, he puts him in mind of exhorting the faithful to be obedient to temporal power; to avoid diſputes, quarrels, and ſlander; to apply themſelves to honeſt callings; and to ſhun the company of an heretick, after the firſt and ſecond admonition.

The epiſtle to Titus has always been acknowledged by the church. The Marcionites did not receive it, nor did the Baſilidians, and ſome other heretics; but Tatian, the head of the Encratites, received it, and preferred it before all the reſt. It is not certainly known from what place it was written, nor by whom it was ſent.

Titus was deputed to preach the goſpel in Dalmatia; and he was ſtill there in the year 65, when the apoſtle wrote his ſecond epiſtle to Timothy. He afterwards returned into Crete; from which it is ſaid, he propagated the goſpel into the neighbouring iſlands. He died at the age of 94, and was buried in Crete. We are aſſured that the cathedral of the city of Candia is dedicated to his name; and that his head is preſerved there entire. The Greeks keep his feſtival on the 25th of Auguſt, and the Latins on the 4th of January.

APOLLOS.

WE have no account in the antient writers, either of the birth or family of Apollos; all they mention is, that he was a Jew of Alexandria, and came to Epheſus, during St. Paul's abſence, who was gone to Jeruſalem.

Apollos was remarkable for his eloquence, and mighty in the ſcriptures. He was inſtructed in the way of the Lord; and as he ſpoke with zeal and fervour, taught diligently the things relating to the kingdom of heaven, though he knew only the baptiſm of John. He was therefore only a catechumen, and did not as yet diſtinctly know the myſteries of our holy religion; but he knew that Jeſus Chriſt was the Meſſiah, and declared himſelf openly to be his diſciple.

When therefore he was come to Epheſus, he began to ſpeak boldly in the ſynagogue, and to ſhew that

Jeſus was the Chriſt. Aquila and Priſcilla having heard him, took him home with them, inſtructed him more fully in the ways of the Almighty, and baptized him, probably in the name of Jeſus Chriſt.

Some time after he was deſirous of travelling into Achaia; and the brethren intreating him to undertake this journey, they wrote to the diſciples, deſiring them to receive him. Accordingly, he arrived at Corinth, and was there very uſeful in convincing the Jews out of the ſcriptures, and demonſtrating to them that Jeſus was the Chriſt. Thus he watered what Paul had planted in this city. But the remarkable fondneſs of the diſciples for his perſon was like to have produced a ſchiſm, ſome ſaying I am of Paul, others, I am of Apollos, and others, I am of Cephas.

But this diviſion, which St. Paul mentions in his firſt epiſtle to the Corinthians, did not prevent St. Paul and Apollos from being cloſely united in the bands of charity. And as ſoon as Apollos heard that St. Paul was coming to Epheſus, he went thither to meet him, and was there when St. Paul wrote his firſt epiſtle to the Corinthians; wherein he teſtifies that he had earneſtly intreated Apollos to return to Corinth, though he had not hitherto been able to prevail with him; but nevertheleſs he gave him room to hope that he would go the firſt opportunity.

St. Jerom ſays, that Apollos was ſo diſſatisfied with the diviſion that happened on his account at Corinth, that he retired into Crete, with Zenæ, a doctor of the law; and that this diſturbance being appeaſed by St. Paul's epiſtle, he returned to Corinth, and was conſecrated biſhop of that city. The Greeks, in their Kalendars, make him biſhop of Duras; and in the Menæa, they tell us he was the ſecond biſhop of Colophon in Aſia. Ferrarius, ſays, he was biſhop of Iconium in Phrygia; and others, that he was biſhop of Ceſarea. But however this be, it is allowed by all, that he was an active and powerful preacher of the goſpel; and that great numbers were, by his preaching, rendered obedient to the faith.

PRIS-

PRISCILLA.

PRISCILLA was very famous in the church in the times of the apoſtles, and is often mentioned by the ſacred writers before her huſband Aquila. They were both Jews; but their country and births are uncertain. They were at Corinth when St. Paul came thither, and had the happineſs of entertaining him in their houſe a very conſiderable time; the apoſtle being of the ſame trade with Aquila; namely, a maker of tents of leather, for the uſe of the army, and at which they both wrought for ſome time.

When St. Paul left Corinth, both Aquila and Priſcilla came with him to Epheſus; where they dwelt a conſiderable time, and preached the goſpel with good ſucceſs. Their houſe was ſo well regulated, that St. Paul calls it a church; an example that ſhould, in ſome meaſure, be followed by every one who pretends to be a follower of the bleſſed Jeſus, though ſhamefully neglected by the greateſt part of chriſtians.

From Epheſus they went to Rome, where they reſided when St. Paul wrote his epiſtle to the Romans, in the year of Chriſt 58; for he ſalutes them firſt of all, and with great commendations. Some time after they returned into Aſia; and St. Paul, writing to Timothy, deſires him to ſalute them on his account. It is thought they died here, and the Latin Martyrologies commemorate them on the eighth of July; but the Greeks celebrate the feaſt of Aquila on the fourteenth of the ſame month. Whether they died in peace or by the hands of thoſe who oppoſed the progreſs of the chriſtian faith, is not known; but however this be, they laboured faithfully to extend the religion of Jeſus; and therefore have been juſtly placed among the firſt preachers of the goſpel.

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ONESIMUS.

ONESIMUS was a native of Phrygia, and for many years a ſlave to Philemon, but was at laſt converted by St Paul, in the following manner: Oneſimus was a young man whom his companions had drawn into wicked courſes. He refuſed to liſten to the admonitions of his maſter; on the contrary, he robbed him, and fled to Rome about the year 61, while St. Paul was there in priſon the firſt time. As Oneſimus knew the apoſtle by reputation, his maſter Philemon being a chriſtian, he made it his buſineſs to find him out; and being now ſorry for the faults he had committed, confeſſed every thing to St Paul, and did him all the ſervice that even Philemon himſelf could have done, had he been at Rome. St. Paul ſoon brought him to a ſenſe of his crimes, prevailed on him to receive the goſpel, inſtructed him, converted him, baptized him, and ſoon after ſent him back to his maſter Philemon, with a letter which we have ſtill among St. Paul's epiſtles; and which is acknowledged as canonical by all the chriſtian churches.

It may paſs for a maſter-piece of eloquence in the perſuaſive kind. There St. Paul has recourſe to all the conſiderations that friendſhip, religion, piety, and tenderneſs can inſpire, in order to reconcile a maſter to his ſervant. He mingles even prayers with authority, and praiſes with recommendations; and he makes a parallel betwixt Oneſimus, become a chriſtian and child of God, with the ſame Oneſimus, an evil ſervant and fugitive. This letter had all the good ſucceſs he could deſire: Philemon not only received Oneſimus as a faithful ſervant, but rather as a brother and a friend. A little after he ſent him back to Rome to St. Paul, that he might continue to be ſerviceable to him in his priſon. And after this we ſee that Oneſimus was employed to carry ſuch epiſtles as the apoſtle wrote at that time. He carried that, for example, which was written to the Coloſſians, while St. Paul was yet in bonds, in the year of Chriſt 62.

From this time Oneſimus's whole employment was in the miniſtry of the goſpel. The apoſtolical conſtitutions acquaint us that St. Paul made him biſhop of Berea, in Macedonia. The Martyrologies give him the title of Apoſtle; and ſay that he ended his life by martyrdom. The Roman martyrology mentions him as being made biſhop of Epheſus by St. Paul, after Timothy: others add, that it

was he whom Ignatius the martyr ſpeaks, as being biſhop of Epheſus in the year of Chriſt 107; but this opinion has no ſolid proof to ſupport it. The ſame Martyrology places his feſtival upon the 16th of February; and ſays, that having ſucceeded Timothy in the biſhoprick of Epheſus, and having been charged with the preaching of the goſpel, he was taken into cuſtody and ſent to Rome, where he was ſtoned for his faith in Jeſus Chriſt. His body was buried there; but was afterwards taken up and carried to the place where he had been biſhop. The Greeks celebrate his feſtival on the 15th of December.

PHILEMON.

PHILEMON was a rich citizen of Coloſſe, and probably a native of that place. He was converted, together with his wife, to the chriſtian faith, by Epaphras, a diſciple of St. Paul; for St. Paul himſelf never preached in Coloſſe.

Perhaps we had never heard of Philemon, had it not been on account of his ſlave Oneſimus, mentioned in the preceding article; and who, after being converted by St. Paul, was ſent back to his maſter with a letter ſtill extant, which paſſes for a maſter-piece in that kind of eloquence which is natural, lively, ſtrong, and pathetic; and which was peculiar to St. Paul.

Philemon had made a church of his houſe; and all his domeſtics as well as himſelf were of the houſhold of faith. His charity, liberality, and compaſſion, were a ſure refuge to all who were in diſtreſs: he followed the example of that great maſter in whom he believed; and was delighted when exerciſed in works of mercy and beneficence.

The apoſtolic conſtitutions ſay, that St. Paul conſtituted him biſhop of Coloſſe; but the Menæa inſinuate that he went to Gaza, in Paleſtine, of which he was the apoſtle and firſt biſhop. From thence he returned to Coloſſe, where he ſuffered martyrdom with Appia his wife, in the time of Nero. They relate ſeveral particulars of his martyrdom; and ſay that his body remained at Coloſſe, where it performed ſeveral miracles. His name is placed in the Martyrologies, on the 22d of November.

CLEOPAS.

THE ancient fathers who mention Cleopas tell us, that he was brother to Joſeph, and both of them the ſons of Jacob. He was the father of Simeon, biſhop of Jeruſalem, of St. James the leſs, of St. Jude, and of Joſeph, or Joſes. Cleopas married Mary, ſiſter to the bleſſed Virgin; ſo that he was uncle to Jeſus Chriſt; and his ſons were couſin-germans to our Saviour. Cleopas, his wife, and ſons, were ſome of the faithful diſciples of Jeſus Chriſt; and of the number who looked upon him as the Redeemer and ſalvation of Iſrael. But Cleopas did not ſufficiently underſtand the myſtery of the croſs, and what Jeſus had ſo often told his diſciples; that it was expedient he ſhould die and return to his father. Cleopas having beheld our Saviour expire upon the croſs, loſt all hopes of ſeeing the kingdom of God eſtabliſhed by his means upon earth.

He departed from Jeruſalem two days after our Saviour's death; that is to ſay, on the very day of his reſurrection: and as he was going to Emmaus with another diſciple, while they were entertaining themſelves with what had paſſed during the feaſt, particularly with reſpect to Jeſus Chriſt, our Saviour joined them in the form of a traveller, aſked what they were diſcourſing upon, and encouraged them; convincing them from the ſcriptures, that it was neceſſary Chriſt ſhould ſuffer death. When they came near Emmaus, Jeſus made a ſhew as if he intended to go further; but Cleopas and his companion detained him and made him ſup with them. Jeſus, while they were at table, took bread and bleſſed it; and having broken it, he preſented ſome of it to them. Hereupon their eyes were opened, and they knew him: but he diſappeared and left them.

They immediately returned to Jeruſalem, and ſought for the diſciples, whom they found aſſembled together in the ſame place. They related what had happened to them. The apoſtles and diſciples in their turn declared to them the reaſon they had for believing Chriſt's reſurrection; and how he had appeared to Peter. While they were yet talking, Jeſus appeared ſtanding in the midſt of them, tho' the doors were ſhut. He ſaluted, bleſſed, and encouraged them, ſhewed them the wounds in his hands and feet, eat in their preſence, expounded the ſcriptures to them; and directed them to go and preach the goſpel throughout the world.

We do not know particularly what were the actions of St. Cleopas during the remainder of his life: but

Uſuardus and Ado, tell us, that he ſuffered martyrdom; and was buried in the ſame houſe where he had received Jeſus Chriſt at his table. It is indeed the opinion of St. Jerom, that Cleopas abode generally at Emmaus; and that it was in this houſe that he invited our Saviour to continue with him. Some believe that afterwards a church was built there. But ſuppoſing Cleopas to have been the brother of Joſeph, and father of St. James, St Jude, Simon, and Joſes, it is more probable that he was a Galilean; and that his habitation was in ſome city of Galilee. However this may be, the Latins honour Cleopas as a ſaint upon the 25th of September. The Greeks make mention of him on the 13th of October, or rather on the 30th; and give him the title of apoſtle.

JOSEPH.

JOSEPH, or Joſes, was the ſon of Mary Cleophas, brother to St. James the leſs, and a near relation to the bleſſed Jeſus, according to the fleſh; being the ſon of Mary, the holy virgin's ſiſter, and Cleopas, who was Joſeph's brother, or ſon to Joſeph himſelf, as ſeveral of the ancients ſuppoſe; who have aſſerted that Joſeph was married to Mary Cleophas, or Eſcha, before he was married to the holy Virgin. Some believe Joſeph, the ſon of Mary Cleophas, to be the ſame with Joſeph Barſabas, ſirnamed the juſt, who is mentioned in the acts of the apoſtles; and was propoſed with St. Matthias to fill up the traitor Judas's place; but in this there is no certainty at all. We learn nothing particular in ſcripture concerning Joſeph, the brother of our lord. If he was one of thoſe among his near kinſmen who did not believe in him, when they would have perſuaded him to go to the feaſt of tabernacles, ſome months before our Saviour's death, it is probable that he was afterwards converted; for it is intimated in ſcripture, that at laſt all our Saviour's brethren believed in him: and St. Chryſoſtom ſays, that they were ſignalized for the eminency of their faith and virtue.

JOSEPH of ARIMATHEA.

JOSEPH of Arimathea, or of Ranatha, Rama or Ramula, a city between Joppa and Jeruſalem, was a Jewiſh ſenator, and privately a diſciple of Jeſus Chriſt: he was not conſenting to the deſigns of the reſt of the Jews, particularly of the members of the Sanhedrim, who condemned

and put Jeſus Chriſt to death: and when our Saviour was dead, he went boldly to Pilate, and deſired the body of Jeſus in order to bury it. This he obtained; and accordingly he buried it after an honourable manner in a ſepulchre newly made in a garden; which was upon the ſame mount Calvary where Jeſus had been crucified. After he had placed it there, he cloſed the entrance of it with a ſtone cut particularly for this purpoſe, and which exactly filled the open part of it.

The Greek church keeps the feſtival of Joſeph of Arimathea on the 31ſt of July. We do not meet with his name in the old Latin Martyrologies; nor was it inſerted in the Roman, till after the year 1585. The body of Joſeph of Arimathea was, they ſay, brought to the abbey of Moyenmontier, by Fortunatus, archbiſhop of Grada; to which Charlemain had given this monaſtry under the denomination of a benefice. Here the body of this ſaint was honoured till the tenth age: but then the monaſtry being given to canons, who continued ſeventy years there, the relicks of this ſaint were carried away by ſome foreign monks; and ſo loſt with many others. Not to ſay any thing of the acts of Joſeph of Arimathea which are generally ſuppoſed to be ſpurious.

NICODEMUS.

NICODEMUS, one of the diſciples of our bleſſed Saviour, was a Jew by nation, and by ſect a Phariſee. The goſpel calls him a ruler of the Jews; and Chriſt gives him the name of a maſter of Iſrael. When our Saviour began to manifeſt himſelf by his miracles at Jeruſalem, at the firſt paſſover which he celebrated there after his baptiſm, Nicodemus made no doubt but that he was the Meſſiah, and came to him by night, that he might learn of him the way to ſalvation. Jeſus told him, that no one could ſee the kingom of heaven, except he ſhould be born again. Nicodemus, taking this in the literal ſenſe, made anſwer, how can a man that is old be born again? can he enter a ſecond time into his mother's womb? To which Jeſus replied, if a man be not born again of water and the ſpirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the fleſh, is fleſh; and that which is born of the ſpirit, is ſpirit. Nicodemus aſks him how can theſe things be? Jeſus anſwered: "Art thou a maſter of Iſrael, and ignorant of theſe things? We tell you what we know, and you receive not our teſtimony.

If

If you believe not common things, and which may be called earthly; how will you believe me if I ſpeak to you of heavenly things? No body has aſcended into heaven, but the ſon of God, who came down from thence. And juſt as Moſes lifted up the brazen ſerpent in the wilderneſs, ſo muſt the ſon of man be lifted up on high: for God has ſo loved the world that he has given his only ſon; ſo that no man who believes in him ſhall periſh, but ſhall have eternal life."

After this converſation, Nicodemus became a diſciple of Jeſus Chriſt; and there is no doubt to be made but he came to hear him, as often as our Saviour came to Jeruſalem. It happened on a time, that the prieſts and Phariſees had ſent officers to ſeize Jeſus, who returning to them, and made this report, that never ſpoke as he did: to which the Phariſees replied, "Are you alſo of his diſciples? Is there any one of the Elders or Phariſees that have believed in him?" Then Nicodemus thought himſelf obliged to make anſwer, ſaying, does the law permit us to condemn any one before he is heard? To which they replied, are you alſo a Galilean? Read the ſcriptures, and you will find, that never any prophet came out of Galilee. After this the council was diſmiſſed. At laſt Nicodemus declared himſelf openly a diſciple of Jeſus Chriſt, when he came with Joſeph of Arimathea to pay the laſt duties to the body of Chriſt crucified; which they took down from the croſs, embalmed, and laid in the ſepulchre.

Nicodemus received baptiſm from the diſciples of Chriſt; but 'tis uncertain whether before or after his paſſion. The Jews being informed of this, depoſed him from his dignity of ſenator, excommunicated, and drove him from Jeruſalem. 'Tis ſaid alſo, that they would have put him to death; but that, in conſideration of Gamaliel, who was his uncle, or couſin-german, they contented themſelves with beating him almoſt to death, and plundering his goods. Gamaliel conveyed him to his country houſe, and provided him with what was neceſſary for his ſupport: and when he died, Gamaliel buried him honourably near St. Stephen. His body was diſcovered in 415, together with thoſe of St. Stephen and Gamaliel; and the Latin church pays honour to all three, on the third of Auguſt.

An apocryphal goſpel under the name of Nicodemus is ſtill extant; which in ſome manuſcripts bears the title of the acts of Pilate: but it is certain that this is not what the ancients cite under the name of the acts of Pilate, which this laſt ſent to Tiberius; being only a modern piece, full of fables and abſurdities, and deſerving no regard to be paid it. At the end of this ſpurious goſpel are read theſe words, which are ſufficient to ſhew its falſity: "In the name of the holy trinity here end the acts of our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt; which were found at Jeruſalem by Theodoſius the Great, in the pretorium of Pontius Pilate, in the public acts which were written in the 19th year of the emperor Tiberius, and

the 17th year of Herod, ſon of Herod, king of Galilee, the 8th day, before the kalends of April, &c. in the 202d olympiad, under the chief prieſts, Joſeph and Caiphas; which was brought to the form of a hiſtory, by Nicodemus, and written in Hebrew after the crucifixion and paſſion of our Saviour.

NICHOLAS.

NICHOLAS was a proſelyte at Antioch, and there converted from the Pagan to the Jewiſh religion; but the time of his birth is uncertain. Afterwards he embraced Chriſtianity, and was one of the moſt zealous and moſt holy men amongſt the firſt chriſtians: ſo that he was choſen for one of the ſeven firſt deacons of the church of Jeruſalem. His memory has been tarniſhed in the church by a blemiſh from which it has not been poſſible to clear him hitherto. Certain heretics were called Nicholaites, from his name: and though perhaps he had no ſhare in their errors nor irregularities; yet he is ſuſpected at leaſt to have given ſome handle to them. This is what the ancients inform us in this matter. He had a wife who was very handſome; and in imitation of thoſe who aimed at a great degree of perfection, he left her to live in a ſtate of continency. St. Epiphanius ſays, that he did not perſevere in this reſolution; but took his wife again: and, in order to juſtify his conduct, he advanced principles contrary to truth and purity. He plunged himſelf into irregularities, and gave beginning to the ſect of the Nicolaites, to that of the Gnoſticks, and to ſeveral others; who, following the bent of their paſſions, invented a thouſand different ſorts of crimes and enormities.

St. Epiphanius is ſupported in this by ſeveral ancient fathers of the church; as, Ireneus, Tertullian, Hyppolitus, Hilary, Gregory of Nyſſa, Philaſter of Breſſa, Jerom, Caſſian, Gregory the great, Pacian, pope Gelaſius, Gilda, and alſo by many moderns, who ſay that Nicholas the deacon was head and author of the infamous and impious ſect of the Nicholaites.

But Clemens Alexandrinus, who was more ancient than Epiphanius, expreſſes great eſteem for Nicholas; and relates the affair quite otherwiſe. The apoſtles, ſays he, having made ſome reproaches to Nicholas, as being too jealous of his wife, he cauſed her to come before them all; and declared that any one might eſpouſe her that pleaſed. This declaration which he made in pure ſimplicity, and without due reflection, was only de-

deſigned as a proof of the little attachment and paſſion he had for his wife: and in reality, as St. Clement adds, I have been informed he never cohabited with any other women. And with regard to his ſon and his daughters, who lived to a pretty old age, they always remained in a ſtate of perfect virginity. But ſuch as were willing to uſe the pretence of Nicholas's authority, vindicated themſelves by what he had done, in order to abandon themſelves to all ſorts of irregularity.

Theſe heretics, as the ſame Clemens reports, grounded themſelves upon a word which Nicholas let drop, that the fleſh ought to be abuſed. By which, nothing elſe was meant but that we ought to ſuppreſs our inclinations to ſenſuality and concupiſcence; and to mortify the paſſions and impetuoſity of the fleſh. Whereas theſe diſciples of pleaſure explained the words according to their own ſenſuality, and not agreeable to the meaning of this apoſtolic man. Euſebius having related, that the Nicholaites gloried in having Nicholas the deacon, as the author of their ſect, confutes them by adducing at length this paſſage of Clemens, Theodoret does the ſame, and he declares ſtill more openly for the ſentiment of Clemens. For excuſing the permiſſion of Nicholas, by which he allowed any one to marry his wife, he ſays, that the deacon had in reality no inclination to permit it; but only intended by this voluntary offer to confute thoſe who had raiſed a murmuring againſt him. St. Auſtin, Victorinus, Petavienſis, Iſidorus, and the council of Tours alſo acquit Nicholas.

Caſſian ſays, that ſome diſtinguiſh Nicholas the founder of the ſect of the Nicholaites, from the perſon of the ſame name, who was one of the firſt ſeven deacons. Probably he would hint at the author of the apoſtolical conſtitutions, who ſays, that the Nicholaites unjuſtly ſcreen themſelves under the authority of Nicholas, one of the firſt deacons. Jeſus Chriſt, in two places of the revelation of St. John, xi. ch. 5. 18. v. condemns the actions and doctrine of the Nicholaites. He ſays, he hates them: he makes it a merit in the biſhop of Epheſus, that he abhors them; and reproaches the biſhop of Pergamus that ſome of his church adhered to their doctrines. In all theſe paſſages St. John does not inſinuate the leaſt thing that may ſeem to excuſe Nicholas; nor to clear him from the accuſation of his being the author of the ſect of Nicholaites: and beſides, we ſee that no chriſtian church has ever paid any honour to the memory of Nicholas, which is a great circumſtance againſt him.

LUCI-

LUCIUS.

LUCIUS of Cyrene, mentioned in the thirteenth chapter of the Acts, was one of the prophets of the chriſtian church at Antioch. While he was employed in his miniſtry with the other prophets, the Holy Ghoſt ſaid to him, Separate me Paul and Barnabas for the work whereunto I have called them; and after they had faſted and prayed, they laid their hands upon them, and let them go. Some take Lucius to have been one of our Lord's ſeventy diſciples. Uſuard and Ado aſſert, that the apoſtle ordained him firſt biſhop of Cyrene. The Latin church honours him on the 6th day of May.

The perſon of the ſame name mentioned in the ſixteenth chapter of the epiſtle to the Romans, and who is ſtyled St. Paul's kinſman, is, as ſome ſay, the ſame with Lucius the Cyrenian: but the generality, with more reaſon diſtinguiſh them; and it ſeems very credible that he and St. Luke are the ſame perſon.

MANAEN.

MANAEN, or Manahem, a chriſtian prophet, and the foſter brother of Herod Antipas, is mentioned in the 13th chapter of the Acts, and 44th year of Chriſt. He was at Antioch with the other prophets, as Simon, ſirnamed Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Barnabas, and Saul, when the Holy Ghoſt ſaid to them, Separate me Barnabas and Saul, for the work whereunto I have called them. Then after having faſted and prayed, they laid their hands on them and let them go. 'Tis thought that Manaen was of the number of the ſeventy diſciples. The authors of the Latin martyrology put his feaſt on the 24th of May, and ſay that he died at Antioch. We know no more of the particulars of his life.

AGA-

AGABUS.

AGABUS was a prophet, and as the Greeks ſay, one of the ſeventy diſciples of our Saviour. He foretold that there would be a great famine over all the earth: and St. Luke in the acts informs us, that it accordingly happened under the emperor Claudius in the fourth year of his reign, and forty-fourth year of Jeſus Chriſt. Profane hiſtorians take notice of this famine: and Suetonius obſerves, that the emperor himſelf was inſulted upon this occaſion, being attacked by the people in the middle of the market-place, and obliged to retire to his palace. As this famine principally affected Judea, the chriſtians of Antioch, upon information of the great want which their brethren were reduced to at Jeruſalem, reſolved to ſend them ſome relief. St. Paul and St. Barnabas were entruſted with this charity, and conveyed it to Jeruſalem.

Ten years after, namely, in the year of Chriſt 58, as St. Paul was going to Jeruſalem, and had already landed at Ceſarea, in Paleſtine, the ſame prophet Agabus, arrived there: and coming to viſit St. Paul and his company, he took this apoſtle's girdle, and binding himſelf hand and foot, he ſaid, thus ſaith the Holy Ghoſt, So ſhall the Jews at Jeruſalem bind the man that oweth the girdle; and ſhall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles. And when they heard theſe things, all they who were preſent beſought St. Paul to go no further; but he anſwered, that he was ready not to be bound only, but alſo to die at Jeruſalem, for the name of the Lord Jeſus. Theſe are all the particulars that we know of the life of Agabus. The Greeks ſay, that he ſuffered martyrdom at Antioch; and they obſerve his feſtival on the 8th of March. The Latins, ever ſince the ninth age have kept it on the 9th of February.

JOHN MARK.

JOHN MARK, couſin to St. Barnabas, and a diſciple of his, was the ſon of a chriſtian woman, named Mary, who had a houſe in Jeruſalem, where the apoſtles and the faithful generally uſed to meet. Here they were at prayers in the night, when St. Peter, who was delivered out of priſon by an angel, came and knocked at the door: and

in this houſe the celebrated church of Sion was ſaid to have been afterwards eſtabliſhed.

John Mark, whom ſome very improperly confound with the evangeliſt St. Mark, adhered to St. Paul and St. Barnabas, and followed them in their return to Antioch: he continued in their company and ſervice till they came to Perga, in Pamphylia: but then ſeeing that they were undertaking a longer journey, he left them, and returned to Jeruſalem. This happened in the year 45, of the common æra.

Some years after, that is to ſay in the year 51, Paul and Barnabas preparing to return into Aſia, in order to viſit the churches, which they had formed there, was of opinion, that John Mark ſhould accompany them in this journey; but St. Paul would not conſent to it: upon which occaſion theſe two apoſtles ſeparated. Paul went to Aſia, and Barnabas with John Mark, to the iſle of Cyprus. What John Mark did after this journey we do not know, till we find him at Rome in the year 63, performing ſignal ſervices for St. Paul, during his impriſonment.

The apoſtle ſpeaks advantageouſly of him in his epiſtle to the Coloſſians, *Marcus, ſiſter's ſon to Barnabas, ſaluteth you. If he cometh unto you receive him.* He makes mention of him again in his epiſtle to Philemon, written in the year 62, at which time he was with St. Paul at Rome: but in the year 65, he was with Timothy in Aſia. And St. Paul writing to Timothy, deſires him to bring Marcus to Rome; adding, that he was uſeful to him for the miniſtry of the goſpel.

In the Greek and Latin churches, the feſtival of John Mark is kept on the 27th of September. Some ſay that he was biſhop of Biblis, in Phœnicia. The Greeks give him the title of apoſtle; and ſay that the ſick were cured by his ſhadow only. It is very probable that he died at Epheſus, where his tomb was very much celebrated and reſorted to. He is ſometimes called ſimply, John or Mark. The year of his death we are ſtrangers to; and ſhall not collect all that is ſaid of him in apocryphal and uncertain authors.

EPAPHRAS.

EPAPHRAS was, as is generally believed, the firſt biſhop of Coloſſe: he was converted by St. Paul, and very much contributed to the converſion of his fellow citizens there. He came to Rome while St. Paul was in bonds in that city; and was himſelf impriſoned with the ſame apoſtle, for the cauſe of Chriſtianity. Having underſtood, that

that the falſe apoſtle, taking the advantage of his abſence, had ſown tares among the wheat in his church, he engaged St. Paul, whoſe name and authority were reverenced throughout all Phrygia, to ſend a letter to the Coloſſians, in order to ſet them right in matters wherein they were miſtaken; and to give them a true knowledge of their falſe teachers. St. Paul, with a view of ſupporting the authority of Epaphras, and recommending his merit to the Coloſſians, ſays, that he is his dear fellow-ſervant, and a faithful miniſter of Chriſt. The feſtival of Epaphras is ſet down in the kalenders on the nineteenth of July; and in them it is ſaid, that he ſuffered martyrdom at Coloſſe.

EPAPHRODITUS.

EPAPHRODITUS, the biſhop, or as St. Paul calls him, the apoſtle of Philippi; or, if we underſtand the word *apoſtolus* in its literal ſignification, the *meſſenger* of the Philippians, as having been ſent A. C. 61. by the faithful of this church, to carry money to the apoſtle, who was then in bonds, and in their name to be ſerviceable to him with his perſon. This commiſſion he executed with abundance of zeal, and expoſed himſelf to great dangers; by which means he brought upon himſelf an indiſpoſition which reduced him to extremity, and obliged him to remain a long time at Rome. In the following year, namely, the ſixty-ſecond of Jeſus Chriſt, he returned with all the haſte he could to Philippi; having had intelligence that the Philippians, upon hearing of his ſickneſs, had been very much afflicted at it. St. Paul ſent a letter by him to the Philippians, from which we learn all theſe particulars.

The Greeks obſerve the feſtival of Epaphroditus on the eighth or ninth of December, as well as on the twenty-ninth and thirtieth of March, and ſtile him apoſtle, one of the ſeventy diſciples, and biſhop of Adriaſa, or Andraca. From a diſcourſe of which Metaphraſtes is ſaid to be the author, we learn that St. Peter ordained one of this name biſhop of Terracina: but he does not tell us whether this be the ſame Epaphroditus mentioned by St. Paul. The Roman kalendar ſets the feſtival of Epaphroditus, biſhop of Terracina, on the twenty-ſecond of March.

ERASTUS.

ERASTUS was a native of Corinth, and diſciple of St. Paul: he is called by this apoſtle, *Chamberlain* of that city, where St. Paul then was; or of Jeruſalem, according to the modern Greeks. He adhered to the apoſtle, and reſigned his employment of chamberlain. He followed him to Epheſus, where he was in the year 56 of Jeſus Chriſt; and from whence St. Paul ſent him with Timotheus to Macedon, probably in order to prepare the alms expected from the faithful. They were both with him at Corinth in the year 58, when he wrote his epiſtle to the Romans, whom he ſalutes in both their names; and it is likely that Eraſtus ever after followed St. Paul till this apoſtle's laſt voyage from Corinth in his way to Rome, where he ſuffered martyrdom in the year 65: for then Eraſtus remained at Corinth, as St. Paul in a little time after ſent word to Timothy.

According to Uſuardus, Ado, and the Roman Martyrology, St. Paul left Eraſtus in Macedonia, and made him biſhop of it; and at laſt ſuffered martyrdom at Philippi. The Greeks, on the contrary, in their kalendars make him biſhop of Paneas, near the ſource of the river Jordan, ſtyle him apoſtle, place him in the number of the ſeventy diſciples; and ſay he died in peace, after having travelled over all the earth, preaching the faith of Chriſt. But none of theſe produce any proof of what they ſay. The Latins keep his feſtival on the twenty-ſixth of July, and the Greeks on the tenth of November.

ANANIAS.

ANANIAS was a diſciple of the bleſſed Jeſus: he dwelt at Damaſcus, when he was directed in a viſion from the Lord to go and find Paul, who had been lately converted, and was come to that city. Ananias anſwered, "Lord, I have "heard by many of this man, how "much evil he hath done to thy "ſaints at Jeruſalem; and how he "hath authority from the chief "prieſts to bind all that call upon "thy

"thy name." But the Lord ſaid unto him, "Go thy way; for he "is a choſen veſſel unto me, to de- "clare my name before the Gen- "tiles and kings, and the children "of Iſrael; for I will ſhew him "how great things he muſt ſuffer for "my nameſake." Ananias went therefore to the houſe where God had revealed to him Paul was; and putting his hands on him, ſaid, "Brother "Saul, the Lord Jeſus, who appeared "unto thee in the way, hath ſent "me that thou mighteſt receive thy "ſight, and be filled with the Holy "Ghoſt. And immediately there "fell from his eyes as it had been "ſcales; and he received ſight forth- "with, and aroſe and was baptized." We know no other circumſtances of Ananias's life beſides this juſt related. The book of apoſtolical conſtitutions takes him to be a lay-man. Acumenius, and ſome moderns, think he was a deacon. St. Auſtin will have it that he was a prieſt, becauſe it is ſaid that St. Paul was ſent to him, that he might receive the ſacrament; the adminiſtration of which was left by Chriſt himſelf to the prieſthood of his church. The modern Greeks maintain that he was one of the ſeventy diſciples, and made biſhop of Damaſcus; and that having obtained the crown of martyrdom, he was buried in the ſame city: and here a fine church is to be ſeen in the place where he was interred. The Turks, who have converted it into a moſque, ſtill preſerve a great veneration for his monument. The Greeks keep his feſtival on the firſt day of October, and the Latins on the twenty-fifth of January.

CLEMENT.

CLEMENT is mentioned by St. Paul, in his epiſtle to the Philippians, where the apoſtle ſays that Clement's name is written in the book of life. The generality of the fathers, and other interpreters, make no queſtion but that this is the ſame Clement who ſucceeded St. Peter after Linus and Cletus, in the government of the church of Rome; and this ſeems to be intimated, when in the office for St. Clement's day, that church appoints this part of the epiſtle to the Philippians to be read. On the contrary, Grotius is of opinion, that the Clement St. Paul ſpeaks of was no more than a prieſt of the church of Philippi.

We find ſeveral things relating to Clement's life in the recognitions and conſtitutions called apoſtolical; but as theſe works are not looked upon as

as authentic, tho' there may be truths in them derived from the tradition of the firſt ages, little ſtreſs is to be laid upon their teſtimony. St. Chryſoſtom thinks, that Clement, mentioned by St. Paul in his epiſtle to the Philippians, was one of the apoſtle's conſtant fellow-travellers. Irenæus, Origin, Clemens of Alexandria, and others of the ancients aſſert, that Clement was a diſciple of the apoſtles; that he had ſeen them and heard their inſtructions. St. Epiphanius, Jerom, Rufinus, Bede, and ſome others, were of opinion, that as the apoſtles St. Peter and St. Paul could not be continually at Rome, by reaſon of he frequent journies which they were obliged to make to other places, and it was not proper that the city of Rome ſhould be without a biſhop, there was a neceſſity to ſupply the want of them by eſtabliſhing Linus, Anaclet, and Clement there. The conſtitutions inform us, that Linus was ordained by St. Paul; Tertullian and Epiphanius ſay, that St. Peter ordained Clement. Rufinus tells us that this apoſtle choſe St. Clement for his ſucceſſor. But Epiphanius believes, that after he had been made biſhop of Rome by St. Peter, he refuſed to exerciſe this office, till after the death of Linus and Anaclet: he was obliged to take upon him the care of the church; and this is the moſt generally received opinion. St. Peter's immediate ſucceſſor was Linus; Linus was ſucceeded by Anacletus; and Anacletus by Clement, in the year of Chriſt ninety-one, which was the tenth of Domitian's reign.

During his pontificate, the church of Corinth having been diſturbed by a ſpirit of diviſion, St. Clement wrote a large letter to the Corinthians, which is ſtill extant, and was ſo much eſteemed by the ancients, that they read it publickly in many churches: and ſome have been inclined to range it among the canonical writings. The emperor Domitian intending to declare war againſt the church of Jeſus Chriſt, a revelation of his deſign was made to Hermas, and he ordered to give a copy of it to pope Clement, that he might communicate it to other churches, and exhort them to provide againſt the ſtorm. We have no certain accounts of what happened to St. Clement during this perſecution; but we are very well aſſured that he lived to the third year of Trajan; which is the hundredth of Jeſus Chriſt. His feſtival is ſet down by Bede, and all the Latin Martyrologies, on the twenty-third of November. The Greeks honour him on the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth of the ſame month. Rufinus, and pope Zozimus, give him the title of Martyr; and the Roman church in its canon places him among the ſaints who have ſacrificed their lives for Jeſus Chriſt. We read in an ancient hiſtory, to the authenticity of which however there are ſome exceptions, that St. Clement was baniſhed by Trajan, to the Cherſoneſus, beyond the Euxine ſea: beſides other particulars in the hiſtory, which we ſhall not mention, as having too much the air of fable.

GAIUS

GAIUS was one of St. Paul's diſciples, and mention is made of him in the Acts of the Apoſtles. He was probably a Macedonian; but was ſettled at Corinth, where he had the honour to lodge St. Paul during his abode there. When the apoſtle went into Aſia, Gaius and Ariſtarchus accompanied him as far as Epheſus, where they abode for ſome time with St. Paul. So that in the ſedition raiſed in this city about Diana of Epheſus, the Epheſians ran in great numbers to the houſe of Gaius and Ariſtarchus, and dragged them to the theatre. St. Paul himſelf was deſirous of going thither; but was prevented by his friends. However, no harm happened either to Gaius or Ariſtarchus, becauſe the commotion was appeaſed by the prudence of the town-clerk. Origen ſpeaks of one Gaius, St. Paul's diſciple, who was ſaid to have been made biſhop of Theſſalonica.

ARISTARCHUS.

ARISTARCHUS was another of St. Paul's diſciples, who has mentioned him in his epiſtles to the Coloſſians and Philemon: he is alſo often mentioned in the Acts of the Apoſtles. He was a Macedonian, and a native of Theſſalonica. He accompanied St. Paul to Epheſus; and continued with him during the two years of his abode there, partaking with him in all the dangers and labours of the apoſtleſhip. He was very near being killed in a tumult raiſed by the Epheſian goldſmiths. He left this city with the apoſtle, and went with him into Greece: from thence he followed him into Aſia; from Aſia into Judea; and from Judea to Rome. Ado, and the Roman Martyrology, make him biſhop of Theſſalonica: but the Greeks ſay he was biſhop of Apamea, in Syria, and was beheaded with St. Paul, at Rome, in the reign of Nero; continuing to the very laſt inviolably attached to the apoſtle.

DE-

DEMAS.

DEMAS is mentioned by St. Paul in the fourth chapter of the Coloſſians as a native of Theſſalonica. At firſt he was one of the moſt zealous diſciples which this apoſtle had, and was very ſerviceable to him at Rome during his impriſonment there; but ſome years after, about the year of Chriſt ſixty-five, he forſook St. Paul, in order to follow a more ſecular life, and withdrew to Theſſalonica, the place of his birth. Epiphanius informs us, that he renounced the faith, and was engaged in the hereſy of Cerinthius, Ebion, and others, who held Jeſus Chriſt to be a mere man. Dorotheus, in his Synopſis, ſays, that when he came to Theſſalonica, he became a prieſt to ſome of the idols of the country: but others affirm, that he recovered after this fall, and ſuffered martyrdom.

SOSIPATER.

SOſipater, of whom St. Paul ſpeaks in the ſixteenth chapter of the Romans, was his kinſman, as ſome think, Lucius, and Jaſon, and Soſipater my kinſmen ſalute you. However in this is ſome difficulty, ſince Jaſon was of Theſſalonica, and Soſipater of Berea in Macedonia; therefore very diſtant from Tarſus, the country of St. Paul. Origen believes they were originally Gentiles; which is another reaſon for thinking that they were not the apoſtle's kinſmen. But in what ſenſe then does he call them his kinſmen? Is it becauſe they were of the ſame nation, of the ſame tribe, of the ſame city, of the ſame religion? or that they were only allied to him? This is what can be determined only at random. I even think that it may be confidently aſſerted, that this Soſipater, who was at Rome in the 58th year of Chriſt, when St. Paul wrote his epiſtle to the Romans, cannot be the Soſipater of Berea; ſince he accompanied St. Paul in the ſame year 58, in his journey to Jeruſalem: and who probably went with him from Corinth, whence the epiſtle to the Romans was written to go by the way of Macedonia to Jeruſalem; as may be ſeen in the 20th chapter of the acts.

What we know of Soſipater is, that

that he was of Berea, as has been ſaid: and it is very likely St. Paul converted him in the 52d year of the vulgar æra, when he viſited that city. The Latin text of the Acts, and ſome Greek manuſcripts, call him Pyrrhus. When St. Paul departed from Corinth, in order to go to Jeruſalem, in the 58th year of the vulgar æra, he was accompanied by Soſipater, Ariſtarchus, and ſome other diſciples. They came with him as far as Philippi; whence St. Paul ſent them before him to Troas, where they ſtayed for him: ſo that he could not be at the ſame time at Rome, as has been obſerved. After this time we know not what became of Soſipater. But the Latins make his feaſt on the 25th of June, and call him a diſciple of St. Paul. The Greeks honour him upon the 28th or 29th of April. They join him with Jaſon, and call him a kinſman of St. Paul. And thus they confound Soſipater of Berea with him of Rome.

PHEBE.

PHEBE, a deaconeſs of the port of Corinth called Cenchrea. St. Paul had a particular eſteem for this holy woman; and Theodoret thinks, that the apoſtle lodged at her houſe for ſome time, while he continued in or near Corinth. In the 16th chapter of the Romans, St. Paul ſays, "I commend unto you Phebe "our ſiſter, which is a ſervant of the "church which is at Cenchrea: "that ye receive her in the Lord, "as becometh ſaints; and that ye "aſſiſt her in whatever buſineſs ſhe "hath need of you: for ſhe hath "been a ſuccourer of many, and of "myſelf alſo." Some moderns have advanced a notion, that Phebe was wife to St. Paul; but none of the ancients have ſaid any thing like it. It is thought that, in quality of deaconeſs, ſhe was employed by the church in ſome miniſtrations ſuitable to her ſex and condition; ſuch as viſiting and inſtructing the chriſtian women, attending them in their ſickneſſes, diſtributing alms to them. The Martyrologies mention Phebe's feſtival on the third of September.

STEPHANUS.

STephanus, the name of one of the principal chriſtians of Corinth, whom St. Paul baptized with all his family, as we find in the firſt chapter of the epiſtle to the Corinthians; and this probably happened about the 52d year of Chriſt, or of the vulgar æra. Stephanus devoted himſelf to the ſervice of the church; and, in the year of our Saviour 56, he came to St. Paul at Epheſus, and, according to St. Chryſoſtom, brought him letters which the church of Corinth wrote to him, in order to conſult him concerning marriage, continency, and perhaps other ſubjects, which St. Paul treats of in the ſaid firſt epiſtle to the Corinthians. This the apoſtle wrote from Epheſus in the 56th year; and it was ſent by Stephanus, Fortunatus, and Achaicus.

ONESIPHORUS.

ONeſiphorus was a diſciple of St. Paul, and mentioned by him in the firſt chapter of his ſecond epiſtle to Timothy. He came to Rome in the year of Chriſt 65, while the apoſtle was in priſon for the faith, and at a time when almoſt every one had forſaken him. At this city he arrived from Aſia, where he had already been very ſerviceable to the church; and having found St. Paul in bonds, after he had ſought him out for a long time, he often aſſiſted him to the utmoſt of his power. For which reaſon the apoſtle wiſhes all ſort of benedictions both on himſelf and his family. The Greeks place his feſtival on the 29th of April and the 8th of December. On the former day they make him biſhop of Colophon in Aſia, and on the latter biſhop of Ceſarea, without diſtinguiſhing which they mean. They rank him in the order of the ſeventy diſciples; and ſeem to aſcribe martyrdom to him. The Roman Martyrology on the 16th of December ſays, that he ſuffered martyrdom on the Helleſpont, whither he went to preach the goſpel along with Porphyrius: that having been apprehended by the command of the

proconſul Adrian, and carried into a temple dedicated to idols, there to offer the incenſe, upon courageouſly refuſing to do it, he was cruelly whipped with rods, and then tied to a horſe's tail, and drawn about till he expired.

LINUS.

LINUS was alſo a diſciple of St. Paul, who mentions him in the firſt chapter of his 2d epiſtle to Timothy, "Linus and Claudia and all the "brethren greet ye." He was, as ſome ſay, the ſon of Claudia ſpoken of in the ſame verſe. St. Irenæus, Euſebius, Optatus, Epiphanius, St. Jerom, and Theodoret, affirm that Linus ſucceeded immediately to St. Peter in the ſee of Rome. He governed for twelve years and ſome months The book of apoſtolical conſtitutions ſays, that Linus was ordained biſhop of Rome by St. Paul, long before the death of St. Peter. Rufinus aſſerts, that Linus and Anacletus governed the church of Rome, whilſt the apoſtles St. Peter and St. Paul were living, but in their abſence, St. Peter a little before his death choſe Clement at laſt to ſucceed him in the ſee of Rome. And Epiphanius will have it, that Clement, out of modeſty, refuſed to exerciſe his office, till after the death of Linus and Cletus. The deſtruction of Jeruſalem happened during his pontificate, in the year of Chriſt 70. The Greeks keep his feſtival on the fifth of November, and the Latins on the 23d of September.

TERTIUS.

TERTIUS was St. Paul's amanuenſis, when he wrote his epiſtle to the Romans in the year of Chriſt 58, as appears in the ſixteenth chapter, "I, Tertius, who "wrote this epiſtle, ſalute you in "the lord." Some think that Tertius copied this letter from the original written by St. Paul's own hand. Lightfoot conjectures that Tertius is the ſame as Silas, who accompanied St. Paul in part of his journeys; Silas in Hebrew, ſignifying the ſame as Tertius in Latin. Some Greek editions, inſtead of Tertius, read Tirentius. The Greeks keep his feſtival on the tenth of November, and give him great commendations: and they make him ſucceſſor to Soſipater, in the biſhopric of Iconium.

TY-

TYCHICUS.

TYCHICUS, a diſciple of St. Paul, whom the apoſtle often made uſe of for carrying his letters to the ſeveral churches. He was of the province of Aſia, and accompanied St. Paul, when, in the year 58, he made his journey from Corinth to Jeruſalem. It was he who carried the epiſtle to the Coloſſians, written in the year 61; and that to the Epheſians, written in 65; and the firſt to Timothy, written in 64. St. Paul did not ſend him merely to carry his letters; but alſo to learn the ſtate of the churches, and to bring him an account of them: wherefore he calls him his dear brother, a faithful miniſter of the Lord, and his companion in the ſervice of God. He had thoughts alſo of ſending him into Crete, to preſide over that church in the abſence of Titus. 'Tis believed likewiſe, that he was deputed to Epheſus, to govern this church, while Timothy ſhould be at Rome; at which time he carried letters from this apoſtle to the Epheſians. The Greeks celebrate the feſtival of Tychicus on the eighth or ninth of December; and give him the title of one of the ſeventy diſciples, and biſhop of Colophon, in the province of Aſia. Uſuard, Ado, and the other Martyrologiſts, mark his feſtival at Paphos, in Cyprus, on the nineteenth of April. And Uſuard only gives him the title of deacon.

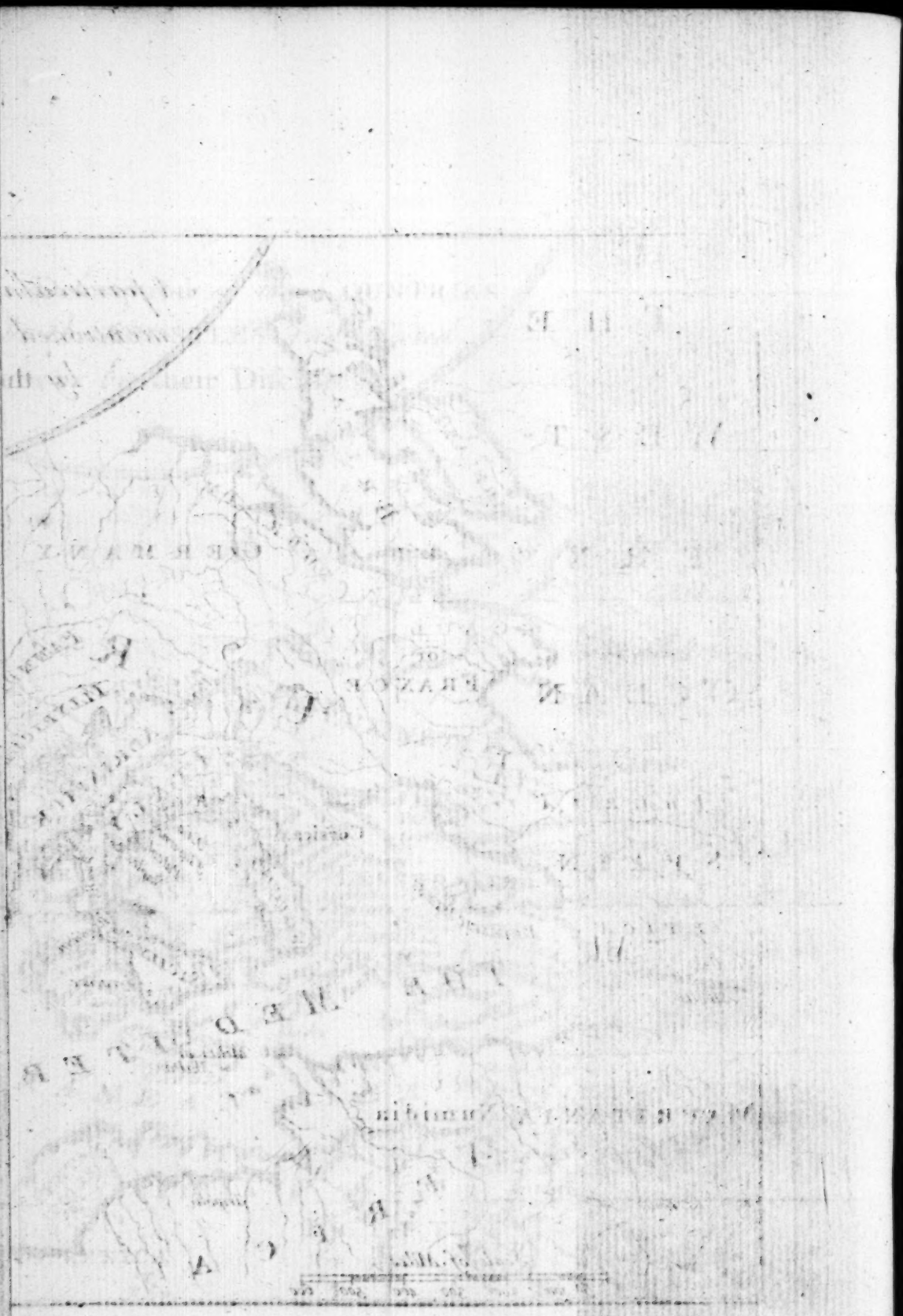
TROPHIMUS.

TROPHIMUS, a diſciple of St. Paul, who was a Gentile by religion, and an Epheſian by birth. After St. Paul had converted him, he conſtantly adhered to him, nor quitted him ever after. He came with the apoſtle from Epheſus to Corinth, and kept him company in his whole journey from Corinth to Jeruſalem, in the year of our Lord 58. When St. Paul was in the temple there, the Jews laid hold of him, crying out, "Men of Iſrael, help: "this is the man that teacheth all "men every where againſt the "people, and the law of this place: "and farther, brought Greeks alſo "into the temple; and hath pollu-"ted this holy place." And this they ſaid, becauſe certain Jews of Ephe-


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Epheſus having ſeen Trophimus with St. Paul in the city, whom they looked upon as a Gentile, imagined that St. Paul had introduced him into the temple. The whole city was immediately in an uproar; and St. Paul was ſecured. It is very probable that Trophimus followed the apoſtle to Rome, and forſook him not in his bonds. It is pretended, that after St. Paul had obtained his liberty, in the year 63, he went into Spain; and that paſſing through the country of the Gauls, he left Trophimus at Arles, as biſhop there, and according to Baronius, in the year 62. But this is very difficult to reconcile with what St. Paul writes to Timothy in the fourth chapter of the ſecond epiſtle, that he had left Trophimus ſick at Miletus. Trophimus muſt neceſſarily have gone back into Aſia, about a year after St. Paul had left him at Arles. The Greeks keep the fourteenth of April in honour of Trophimus; and ſay he was beheaded by the command of Nero, together with St. Paul. Thoſe of Arles keep his feſtival on the twenty-ninth of December.

The VIRGIN MARY.

AS we are taught by the predictions of the prophets, that a virgin was to be the mother of the promiſed Meſſiah, ſo we are aſſured by the unanimous concurrence of the evangeliſts, that this virgin's name was Mary, the daughter of Joachim and Anna, of the tribe of Judah; and married to Joſeph, of the ſame tribe. The ſcripture indeed tells us no more of the bleſſed virgin's parents, than that ſhe was of the family of David, and of the town of Bethlehem: not ſo much as their names being mentioned, unleſs by Heli, in St. Luke's genealogy, we underſtood Joachim the virgin's father. All that is ſaid concerning the birth of Mary and her parents is to be found only in ſome apocryphal writings; but which however are very ancient. St. John ſays, that Mary the wife of Cleophas, who was the mother of thoſe whom the goſpel ſtyle our Lord's brethren, was the virgin's ſiſter. Mary then was of the royal race of David. She was allied likewiſe to the family of Aaron, ſince Elizabeth the wife of Zacharias, and mother of John the Baptiſt, was her couſin.

The Latin church, in conformity to that of the Greeks, has for ſome centuries paſt, honoured St. Joachim

as the father of St. Anne, the mother of the bleſſed virgin.

Though God hath not been pleaſed to acquaint us with the particulars of her birth; yet the Roman church, from a grateful ſenſe of the infinite bleſſings conveyed to us by the bleſſed Jeſus, hath long celebrated her conception on the eighth of December in the Weſt, and the ninth in the Eaſt, and her nativity on the eighth of September. An anniverſary feſtival of her preſentatation in the temple is kept likewiſe on the 21ſt of November; and it is commonly believed, that ſhe was conſecrated to God at three years of age. But not to build upon uncertainties, thus much we are aſſured by the teſtimony of an angel, that ſhe was happy above all other women in the divine favour; that ſhe was full of grace; and that the Lord was with her in a peculiar manner.

For ſince the ſon of God, in order to become man, and to dwell among us, was obliged to take a human body from ſome woman, it was agreeable to his infinite wiſdom that he ſhould chuſe for this purpoſe one whoſe endowments of body and mind were moſt holy and pious; who excelled the reſt of her ſex in chaſte and virtuous diſpoſitions; and who, in ſhort, was a repoſitory of all the divine graces.

The exceſſes of that devotion which has been paid to the bleſſed virgin, and the legendary tales and lying viſions of monks, cannot in reaſon blemiſh her real excellencies, no more than the idolatries of the pagans obſcure the light of the ſun which they deified. After all the abuſes of ſuperſtition or profaneneſs, the extremes of honour and diſhonour, there will ever be a very high eſteem and veneration due to the mother of God.

That the mother of our Lord, notwithſtanding her marriage, was even in that ſtate to remain a pure virgin, and to conceive Chriſt in a miraculous manner, is the clear doctrine of the holy ſcriptures. "Behold, *ſays Iſaiah, in chap.* vii. *propheſying of this myſterious incarnation*, a virgin ſhall conceive and bear a ſon." The Hebrew word *Almah* moſt properly ſignifies a virgin; and ſo it is tranſlated here by all the ancient interpreters; and never once uſed in the ſcripture in any other ſenſe, as ſeveral learned men have proved againſt the pretenſions particularly of the modern Jews. It primarily ſignifies *hid*, or *concealed*; whence it is uſed to denote a virgin, becauſe of the cuſtom in the eaſtern countries of keeping ſuch concealed from the view of men, never ſuffering them to ſtir out of the women's apartment.

Tho' we cannot doubt but that God, who ordained this myſtery, provided for all circumſtances requiſite to its accompliſhment; yet we may conſider which way a decorum was preſerved in this caſe by marriage. St. Matthew ſays, "The virgin was eſpouſed to Joſeph; and that before they came together, ſhe was found to be with child of the Holy Ghoſt." Whence we may conclude that it was not a conſtant cuſtom for the bride to go and live at the bridegroom's

groom's houſe immediately upon her being affianced to him.

Notwithſtanding the various circumſtances relating to this affair, as told us in apocryphal books, are not to be relied on as certain; yet, however, Mary's reſolution of continency, even in a married ſtate, cannot be called in queſtion, ſince her virginity is atteſted by the goſpel; and that herſelf, ſpeaking to the angel, who declared to her that ſhe ſhould become the mother of a ſon, told him, "That ſhe knew not a man;" or that ſhe lived in continency with her huſband. For which reaſon, when Joſeph perceived her pregnancy, he was at firſt ſo extremely ſurpriſed and ſcandalized at it, that he reſolved to put her away, but ſecretly, without making any noiſe, and without obſerving the common formalities: for he knew the mutual reſolution they had agreed to, of being in continence, tho' in a ſtate of marriage.

That ſhe obliged herſelf, notwithſtanding her marriage, to perpetual virginity, is plain; and Grotius is very inclinable to the ſame opinion with the Romiſh church in this point: and this is the beſt way of accounting for the reaſon of her demand to the angel, *How ſhall this be, ſeeing I know not man?* If, ſays he, what Epiphanius has delivered from ancient tradition be true, that Joſeph was a venerable old man, and ſuperannuated when Mary was eſpouſed to him, it will be more probable what the ancients generally thought, that theſe words proceeded from a reſolution ſhe had taken of continuing a virgin; and that ſhe married herſelf to an aged man, not to live with him in the ordinary uſe of marriage, and with a proſpect of having children; but only that he might be the guardian of her virginity, and ſhe might enjoy a protection from thoſe injuries to which her ſex would otherwiſe be expoſed. Nor were ſuch reſolutions ſo unknown among the Jews, as ſome have imagined. This Grotius proves from a notable paſſage in Philo; and of which he gives an inſtance in Jephtha's daughter. Mary then might be reſolute in her purpoſe of virginity, and yet become a wife, for the above reaſons. But the deſign of God in her marriage, was to ſecure her reputation under the circumſtances of ſupernatural conception; and conceal the myſtery of it for the preſent. And Joſeph being certified of the divine purpoſe herein, obediently conformed to it, and obſerved ſuch a chaſte and holy converſation as was ſuitable to ſo high a myſtery.

The virgin Mary then being eſpouſed, or, if you will, married to Joſeph, the angel Gabriel appeared to her, in order to acquaint her, that ſhe ſhould become the mother of the Meſſiah. Mary aſked him how that could be, ſince ſhe knew no man? To which the angel replied, that the Holy Ghoſt ſhould come upon her; and the power of the higheſt ſhould overſhadow her: ſo that ſhe ſhould conceive without the concurrence of any man. And to confirm what he had ſaid to her, and ſhew that nothing is impoſſible to God, he added, that her couſin Elizabeth, who was both old and barren, was then in the

ſixth month of her pregnancy. Mary anſwered him, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy word." And by the miraculous operation of the Holy Ghoſt, ſhe preſently conceived the ſon of God; the true Emanuel, that is to ſay, God with us. Whether the Holy virgin immediately after the anunciation, went up to the paſſover at Jeruſalem (as ſome have imagined, this being the ſeaſon of the year for it) or not, we have no account from the evangeliſt St. Luke: but this he aſſures us, that a little while after ſhe ſet out for Hebron, a city in the mountains of Judah, in order to viſit her couſin Elizabeth, to congratulate her upon her pregnancy, which ſhe had learned from the angel, at an age when ſuch a bleſſing was not uſually to be expected. And no ſooner had ſhe entered the houſe and began to ſpeak, than upon Elizabeth's hearing the voice of Mary's ſalutation, her child, young John the Baptiſt, tranſported with ſupernatural emotions of joy, leaped in her womb. Whereupon ſhe was filled with the Holy Ghoſt; and being by divine inſpiration acquainted with the myſtery of the incarnation, ſhe reſaluted Mary, and cried out, "Bleſſed art thou amongſt women; and bleſſed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord ſhould come to me? For lo, as ſoon as the voice of thy ſalutation ſounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. And bleſſed is ſhe that believed: for there ſhall be a performance of thoſe things which were told her from the Lord." Then Mary, filled with acknowledgments and ſupernatural light, praiſed God, ſaying, "My ſoul doth magnify the Lord, and my ſpirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour, &c." as we find it in the hymn called Magnificat.

After Mary had continued here about three months, till Elizabeth was delivered, as St. Ambroſe thinks, that ſhe might ſee him on whoſe account ſhe principally made that viſit, ſhe then returned to her own houſe at Nazareth.

When ſhe was ready to be delivered, an edict was publiſhed by Cæſar Auguſtus, in the year of the world 4000, the firſt of Chriſt, and the third before the vulgar æra; which decreed, that all the ſubjects of the Roman empire ſhould go to their reſpective cities and places; there to have the names regiſtered according to their families. Thus Joſeph and Mary, who were both of the lineage of David, repaired to their city of Bethlehem, the original and native place of their family. But while they were in this city, the time being fulfilled in which Mary was to be delivered, ſhe brought forth her firſt-born ſon, wrapped him in ſwaddling-cloaths, and laid him in the manger of the ſtable or cavern whither they had retired; for they could find no place in the public inn, becauſe of the great concourſe of people that were then at Bethlehem on the ſame occaſion: or they were forced to withdraw into the ſtable of the inn, not being able to get a more convenient place for her to be delivered.

The

The Greek fathers generally agree that the place of Chriſt's birth was a cavern. Juſtin and Euſebius place it out of the city, but in the neighbourhood; and St. Jerom ſays, it was at the extremity of the city, towards the ſouth. It was commonly believed that the virgin brought forth Jeſus the night after her arrival at Bethlehem, or on the 25th of December. Such is the ancient tradition of the church. The fathers inform us that Mary brought forth Jeſus Chriſt without pain, and without the aſſiſtance of any midwife; becauſe ſhe had conceived him without concupiſcence; and that neither ſhe nor the fruit ſhe brought forth had any ſhare in the curſe pronounced againſt Adam and Eve.

At the ſame time the angels made the birth of Chriſt known to the ſhepherds who were in the fields near Bethlehem; and who came in the night to ſee Mary and Joſeph, and the child lying in the manger, in order to pay him their tribute of adoration. Mary took notice of all theſe things, and laid them up in her heart. Some time after came the Magi, or wiſe-men from the eaſt, and brought to Jeſus the myſterious preſents of gold, frankincenſe, and myrrh, having been directed thither by a ſtar which led the way before them to the very houſe where the babe lay. After this being warned by an angel that appeared to them in a dream, they returned into their own country, by a way different from that by which ſhe came, without giving Herod the intelligence he wanted; which he pretended was in order to come and worſhip the babe, though his real deſign was to cut him off, from a jealouſy of his rivalling that artful monarch in his kingdom.

But the time of Mary's purification being come, that is, forty days after the birth of Jeſus, ſhe went to Jeruſalem, there to preſent her ſon in the temple; and there to offer the ſacrifice appointed by the law, for the purification of women after child-birth. At that time there was at Jeruſalem an old man named Simeon, who was full of the Holy Ghoſt; and had received a ſecret aſſurance that he ſhould not die before he had ſeen Chriſt the Lord. Accordingly he came into the temple by the impulſe of the ſpirit of God, and taking the little Jeſus in his arms, he bleſſed the Lord; and then addreſſing himſelf to Mary, ſaid, "This child is ſent for the riſing and falling of many in Iſrael; and for a ſign which ſhall be ſpoke againſt: even ſo far as that thy own ſoul ſhall be pierced as with a ſword, that the ſecret thoughts in the hearts of many may be diſcovered."

Afterwards, when Joſeph and Mary were preparing to return to their own country of Nazareth, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joſeph in a dream, bidding him to retire into Egypt with Mary and the child, becauſe Herod had a deſign to deſtroy Jeſus. Joſeph obeyed the admonition, and continued in Egypt till after the death of Herod; when both he and Mary returned to Nazareth, not daring to go to Bethlehem,

hem, becauſe it was in the juriſdiction of Archelaus, the ſon and ſucceſſor of Herod the Great.

Joſeph and Mary went every year to Jeruſalem to the feaſt of the paſſover: and when Jeſus was twelve years of age, they brought him with them to the capital. When the days of the feſtival were ended, they ſet out on their return home; but the child Jeſus continued at Jeruſalem, without their perceiving it; and thinking that he might be with ſome of the company, they went on a day's journey: when not finding him among their acquaintance, they returned to Jeruſalem, ſeeking for him. Three days after they found him in the temple, ſitting among the doctors, hearing them, and aſking them queſtions. When they ſaw him they were filled with aſtoniſhment: and Mary ſaid to him, My ſon, why have you ſerved us thus? Behold your father and myſelf, who have ſought you in great affliction. Jeſus anſwered them, Why did you ſeek me? Did not you know that I muſt be employed about my father's buſineſs? Afterwards he returned with them to Nazareth, and lived in filial ſubmiſſion to them: but his mother laid up all theſe things in her heart. The Goſpel ſays nothing more of the virgin Mary, till the marriage at Cana of Galilee, where ſhe was preſent with her ſon Jeſus.

In the thirty-third year of Jeſus Chriſt, and the thirtieth of the vulgar æra, our Saviour reſolved to manifeſt himſelf to the world, and therefore went to the baptiſm of St. John, from thence into the wilderneſs, and thence to the abovementioned wedding, to which he, with his mother and diſciples had been invited. At this entertainment, the proviſion of wine being ſomewhat ſcanty, (probably becauſe the friends of the married couple were but mean) Chriſt's mother told her ſon, they had no wine, not doubting of his power to ſupply them: to which Jeſus anſwered in terms which had ſome appearance of a rebuke, "Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come." St. Chryſoſtom, and the followers of him in his explications, impute what was ſaid by the Holy Virgin to ſome motive of vanity, and that ſhe was tempted by a deſire of ſeeing her own credit raiſed by the miracles of her ſon; but the other fathers and commentators aſcribe it to her charity and compaſſion towards theſe poor people. And it is thought that Chriſt's anſwer was intended for more general uſe than the preſent occaſion: namely, to teach us to wait God's time of doing his own works; and certainly our Lord deſigned no affront to his mother, to whom he always paid a pious and filial reverence. This anſwer is imputed by the ſaid fathers and commentators to Jeſus, not as man; but to Jeſus as God. In this reſpect he ſays to Mary, what have I to do with thee? I know when I ought to ſhew forth my power; nor does it belong to you to appoint me the time of working miracles, ſince the proper time for this has not yet begun; and further intimating, that when it did, theſe were not to be wrought out of any pri-

private, partial, and civil views, but in purſuance of that great end which he had in charge, the converſion and ſalvation of mankind. And ſo his mother underſtood him, receiving the anſwer with meekneſs; and charging the ſervants to attend him, and do whatever he commanded them.

There being in the room ſix great ſtone pitchers, Jeſus ordered them to be filled brim full of water; and afterwards commanded the ſervants to fill out and carry it to the maſter of the feaſt, who on taſting it found it was excellent wine. And this is the firſt miracle Jeſus wrought at the beginning of his public miniſtry.

From hence our Lord went to Capernaum with his mother and brethren; that is, with his relations and diſciples, in order, as St. Chryſoſtom thinks, to fix the virgin Mary in a ſettled habitation, while he travelled about the country in the exerciſe of his miniſtry: and this indeed ſeems to be the place where the Holy Virgin afterwards principally reſided. St. Epiphanius, on the contrary, believed that ſhe followed him every where, during the whole time of his preaching; though we do not find that the evangeliſts make any mention of her when they ſpeak of ſeveral holy women of Galilee, who followed him and miniſtered to his neceſſities.

We learn indeed from the third chapter of St. Mark, that on a certain day in the year of Chriſt 34, and vulgar æra 31, that as Jeſus Chriſt was teaching in a houſe at Capernaum, ſo great a croud of people ſtood about him, that neither he nor his diſciples had time to take any refreſhment; which cauſed a report to be ſpread abroad, that he had fainted away, or was fallen into a ſwoon: thus Grotius interprets the word *exeſte*. The Greek term might inſinuate that he was become mad, or had loſt his underſtanding; and the vulgate reads it, *dicebant enim quoniam in furorem verſus eſt*, which our tranſlators have rendered, "They ſaid he was beſides himſelf." The mother of Jeſus and his brethren, as it was natural for them, upon hearing ſuch a report, came inſtantly to ſeek him, and endeavoured to take him out of the croud, in order to give him all the relief in their power. It was not the people, without doubt, who made ſo wrong a judgment of Jeſus; but the ignorant multitude, or the Phariſees, who ſaid in the ſame place that he was poſſeſſed of the devil. The virgin, and the brethren or relations of Jeſus came therefore to ſee what had given occaſion to this report. And when they could not get into the houſe for the throngs of people, they cauſed a meſſage to be conveyed from one to another, till it was told Jeſus, "That his mother and his brethren were at the door, and deſired to ſpeak with him." Jeſus being accordingly informed of their coming, and that they waited to ſpeak with him, being at that inſtant engaged in the work of his miniſtry, preaching the word of God, he made this reply: Who is my mother, and who are my brethren? and looking upon thoſe that were round about him, he ſaid, Theſe are my mother and brethren; declaring, "That

"That whoſoever did the will of his heavenly father, the ſame was his mother, and ſiſter, and brother." This was what Chriſt had taught in another place, that we muſt prefer God to all human relations, and give the preference to his ſervice. But this ſaying could not reflect upon his mother, who was among the principal of thoſe who did the will of his heavenly father. Immediately upon her approach, a woman of the company ſaid with a loud voice, directing her words to Jeſus: "Bleſſed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou haſt ſucked." To which he replied, "Yea rather, bleſſed are they that hear the word of God and keep it." Not intimating hereby that ſhe who had the honour to bear him, did not deſerve to be called bleſſed throughout all generations; but that even her happineſs conſiſted more in doing the will of Chriſt than in giving him a human body.

From this time we have no further account of the Holy Virgin, till we find her in Jeruſalem at the laſt paſſover our Saviour celebrated there; which was in the thirty-ſixth year of Chriſt, and thirty-third of the vulgar æra. In this city ſhe ſaw all that was tranſacted againſt him, followed him to Mount Calvary, and ſtayed at the foot of the croſs during the paſſion of her bleſſed ſon. We cannot doubt but her ſoul was at this time pierced through, as old Simon had propheſied, with the moſt acute pains, for the death of ſuch a ſon. Yet her conſtancy was remarkable: for when the apoſtles were all frightened away from their maſter, ſhe with a courage undaunted and worthy of the mother of God, continued even in the midſt of the executioners, being prepared to die with her ſon.

On this melancholy occaſion we cannot but ſuppoſe the Holy Virgin to have been affected with ſentiments fit for one who had ſo miraculouſly conceived, and ſo carefully obſerved and laid up in her mind all occurrences that related to the ſon of God.

Jeſus Chriſt, who came to ſet us a pattern of all virtue through the whole courſe of his life, was pleaſed in his laſt moments to teach us, that in what circumſtances ſoever we are, we muſt never caſt off that love and care which God's law obliges us to have for thoſe who gave us life. Being now ready to leave the world, and ſeeing his mother at the foot of the croſs, and his beloved diſciple, St. John near her, he bequeathed her to him by his laſt will and teſtament, ſaying to his mother, "Woman, behold thy ſon." And to the diſciple, "Behold thy mother." And from that hour the diſciple took her home to his own houſe.

It is not to be doubted but that our Saviour appeared to his holy mother immediately after his reſurrection; and that ſhe was the firſt, or at leaſt one of the firſt, to whom he vouchſafed this great conſolation.

St. Luke acquaints us in the firſt chapter of the Acts, that the Virgin Mary was with the apoſtles and others at his aſcenſion, and continued with them when aſſembled at Jeruſalem

ſalem after his aſcenſion, waiting for the deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt: and it is highly probable that from her they learned the whole hiſtory of our Lord's private life before his baptiſm; though St. Chryſoſtom will have them to be taught it by revelation. After this ſhe dwelt in the houſe of St. John the evangeliſt, who took care of her as of his own mother. 'Tis thought that he took her along with him to Epheſus, where ſhe died in an extreme old age: and there is a letter of the œcumenical council of Epheſus, importing, that in the fifth century it was believed ſhe was buried there.

Yet this opinion was not ſo univerſally received, but that ſome authors of the ſame age think the Virgin Mary died and was buried at Jeruſalem; or rather in her ſepulchre at Gethſemane, near that city, where to this day it is ſhewn in a magnificent church dedicated to her name.

Epiphanius, the moſt learned father of the fourth century, declares he could not tell whether ſhe died a natural death, or by martyrdom; or whether ſhe remained immortal; or whether ſhe was buried or not. "None, ſays he, knows any thing of her deceaſe: but that it was glorious cannot be doubted. That body which was perfectly chaſte and pure enjoys a happineſs worthy of her, through whom the ſun of righteouſneſs aroſe and ſhone upon the world."

A learned writer has added to the forecited paſſage of the council of Epheſus, another remark from their acts; "That the cathedral church of Epheſus was dedicated under the name of the virgin Mary; and that we find no other church of her name at that time in any approved author." For though the Holy Virgin was always held in great veneration, yet it was not the cuſtom of the firſt ages to give the name of any ſaint to a church, except they had ſome of the relicks, or built it in the place where ſuch a ſaint was martyred; or for ſome reaſon of the like nature.

The ſentiments of the Roman church are, that ſhe is dead: but they are divided as to her riſing again; or whether ſhe ſtays for the general reſurrection at Epheſus, Jeruſalem, or any other place.

With regard to the age at which ſhe died, and the preciſe year of her death, 'tis needleſs to trouble ourſelves about this enquiry; ſince nothing can be ſaid on theſe matters but what is very doubtful: and they cannot be fixed but at random. Nicephorus Calliſtus, and thoſe that have followed him, give no proof of what they advance on this ſubject, and therefore deſerve no credit. Nor ſhall we build much upon the deſcription of the Holy Virgin given us by the ſame author, who ſays, that ſhe was of a moderate ſtature; or, according to ſome, a little below the ordinary ſtature of women: that her complexion was of the colour of wheat, her hair fair, her eyes lively, the eyeballs yelloviſh, or olive-coloured, her eye-brows black and ſemicircular, her noſe pretty long, her lips red, her hands and fingers large, her air grave, ſimple, and moſt,

deſt, her cloaths neat without any pride or oſtentation, and of the natural colour of the wool. It has been pretended that St. Luke had drawn her picture; and in ſeveral places are ſhewn pictures of her, which they affirm to be copies from that original by St. Luke. But the ancients have no where informed us that St. Luke was a painter, or that he had painted the Holy Virgin. The abovementioned Nicephorus Calliſtus, an author of the fourteenth century, is the firſt who has ſpoken of this in a poſitive manner; but Theodorus, lecturer of the church of Conſtantinople, who lived in the ſixth century, ſays, that Eudocia ſent from Jeruſalem to Conſtantinople to the empreſs Pulcheria, a picture of the Holy Virgin, painted by St. Luke. But we need be in no great pain about this, ſince the true images of ſaints are the ideas of their virtues which we ſhould form in our minds, and expreſs by our actions. Certain it is that this holy evangeliſt has acquainted us with ſome particulars of the life of the holy virgin, that could hardly be learned from any one but herſelf; which may incline us to believe that he had the happineſs of her acquaintance, and a good ſhare of her confidence.

With regard to her character, we ſhall only mention in general, that common remark which the evangeliſts make, that ſhe was more diſpoſed to think than to ſpeak; and obſerved the extraordinary things which were ſaid of her ſon with ſilence; or, as they expreſs it, "She pondered them in her heart."

There are ſhewn ſome letters of the Virgin Mary to St. Ignatius the martyr, and from St. Ignatius to the virgin. St. Bernard believed them to be genuine; but now no one doubts that they are ſpurious. The ſame judgment is formed about the pretended letters of the virgin to the people of Meſſina, and to thoſe of Florence; which they pretend ſhe writ from Jeruſalem in Hebrew, but were tranſlated by St. Paul into Greek; at leaſt that to the Meſſinians, and which Conſtantine Laſcaris turned into Latin.

The viſions and revelations which ſome Romiſh monks pretend to have had of the bleſſed virgin, ſufficiently deſtroy themſelves, as being not only abſurd and ridiculous, but inconſiſtent with her honour and ſanctity: but we cannot from hence abſolutely conclude that ſhe never appeared to any holy perſons; and as ſome of the fathers of the church give an account of ſuch apparitions, we ſhall ſelect the following:

St. Gregory Nyſſen reports of Gregory Thaumaturgus, that he being made biſhop of Neo Cæſaria in Pontus, and very ſolicitous concerning the doctrine which he ſhould preach to his people, the bleſſed virgin appeared to him in a form more glorious than any thing upon earth, with St. John the apoſtle in her company, to whom ſhe recommended the inſtructing of Gregory in the myſteries of the chriſtian religion. Upon which the apoſtle dictated to him a ſhort confeſſion of faith, which Gregory forthwith committed to writing. This was preſerved afterwards

wards with the greateſt care; and Gregory Nyſſen aſſures us, that it became the ſtanding creed of Neo Cæſaria; and kept that church clear from Arianiſm, whilſt all other places were infected with it.

Gregory Nazianzen likewiſe gives us the following relation: That St. Juſtina the virgin, who ſuffered martyrdom under Diocleſian, ſeeing herſelf attacked by the magic arts which Cyprian employed againſt her, had recourſe to the Virgin Mary, and intreated her to ſuccour a helpleſs maid againſt the infernal powers. Her prayers were heard, the devils vanquiſhed; Cyprian was thereupon converted, and embraced the chriſtian faith, and was afterwards an illuſtrious biſhop, and obtained the crown of martyrdom with St. Juſtina. This ſtory, ſays Phocius, was largely mentioned by the empreſs Eudoſia in an heroic poem of three books. Biſhop Fell thinks that this ſtory which is told of St. Cyprian, is much interpolated, or rather invented by one of thoſe who took pleaſure in improving the lives of martyrs with ſome new materials. Dr. Cave juſtly ſuſpects that this Cyprian is a different perſon from the great biſhop of Carthage, and by miſtake confounded with him by Nazianzen, Prudentius, Metaphraſtus, and others. However he truly obſerves, that the hiſtory is older than the times of Nazianzen.

But not to lay greater ſtreſs upon ſuch things than they challenge from the credit of the relators, and the probability which they carry upon the face of them, let it ſuffice to have mentioned only thoſe two inſtances, and refer the credibility to the judgment of the candid reader.

The Jews, thoſe profeſſed enemies of our Saviour, that gentile brood of blinded progenitors, and obſtinate miſcreants, have vented many falſities againſt the Virgin Mary, in the book called *Toledos Jeſu*; or, the Life of Jeſus Chriſt; which they themſelves have publiſhed. From this treatiſe ſome of our puny modern deiſts, aſſembled in their petty mechanical clubs of the Robin-Hood, &c. ſeem to have adopted thoſe infamous notions that tend to blacken the virgin, with regard to our Saviour's deſcent and birth; and in direct oppoſition to the evangelical hiſtory of that ſacred event. However contemptible, in reality, ſuch adverſaries are upon ſeveral accounts, thus much ſeemed neceſſary to be ſaid, in order to obviate the poiſon which they ſpread among the middle, and lower claſſes of mankind, among which they are converſant and whence the heroes of that ſect principally ſpring up.

The Mahometans, on the contrary, entertain great ſentiments of reſpect and eſteem for her; which one would hardly believe of people ſo far out of the way of ſalvation. See the chapter in the Alcoran, about Mary and Herbelot. But they do not confine themſelves within the bounds of truth and ſobriety; for they add many fabulous ſtories, which we ſhall not repeat, to what are otherwiſe known concerning Mary.

As to the purity of the Holy Virgin, in her birth and in the conception

tion of the *word*; and with regard to her virginity, both before and after her bringing-forth, they ſpeak in ſuch a manner as might well be a ſhame to many chriſtians, and particularly quaſh the brutal effrontery of the abovementioned pygmean antagoniſts, in their impudent attempts to depreciate her; the main drift of which glances at, and is plainly meant as a ſecret thruſt againſt her great and heavenly progeny.

The Mahometans ſay, in conformity to the goſpel account, "That the Angel Gabriel was ſent to Mary, to declare to her the birth of Jeſus Chriſt." And further, "He ſaid to her, O Mary, thou art elected, purified, and in a moſt particular manner choſen from among all the women in the world! O Mary, ſubmit yourſelf to the Lord, proſtrate yourſelf, and adore him with all the creatures that worſhip him. I am come to tell you a great ſecret: God declares his word to you, whoſe name ſhall be Chriſt, or Jeſus the Meſſiah, who ſhall be your ſon, moſt worthy of reſpect, both in this and the other world."

Abulfarage writes in his dynaſties, that it was a tradition among the oriental chriſtians, that the Holy Virgin was but thirteen years of age when ſhe brought forth Jeſus Chriſt; and that ſhe lived but to be fifty-one.

Some Muſſulmen falſely impute to the chriſtians, that they acknowledge the Virgin Mary as the third perſon of the holy trinity; which miſtake proceeds from hence, that the chriſtians of the eaſt give her the name of Al-ſeidai, which ſignifies the lady; and among the Greek fathers St. Cyril has unguardedly called her, "The ſupplement or completion of the moſt holy trinity." But others among the Mahometans vindicate us from this calumny.

Towards the end of the fourth century, the perpetual virginity of the mother of our Lord was oppoſed by ſome. Epiphanius gives them the name of Antidico-marianiſts, or enemies to Mary. They held, that after the birth of Jeſus Chriſt, Joſeph had other children by her, whom the goſpel ſtiles the brethren of our Lord. This conceit, which came originally from the Eunomians and Apolinariſts, ſpread itſelf more particularly in Arabia. A while after it was carried to Rome by Helvidius, and entertained by a certain biſhop who is thought to be the hereſiarch Bonoſos; but it pleaſed God to ſuppreſs it by three of the greateſt men of that age, namely, St. Epiphanius, St. Jerom, and St. Ambroſe; to ſay nothing of St. Auguſtine, who did not write profeſſedly againſt it, but encountered it by the bye.

Without reciting here the arguments which they made uſe of on this occaſion, it may ſuffice to conclude with St. Baſil, That though this opinion does not affect the foundations of religion, which only requires us to believe that Mary continued a virgin till the birth of Jeſus Chriſt, as the goſpel aſſure us, yet it offends the ears of pious chriſtians for any to affirm that ſhe ever ceaſed to be ſuch.

The

The ancient fathers of the eaſtern and weſtern churches aſſerted her perpetual virginity; and St. Auguſtine tells us, that this is one of thoſe points which we ought to receive as of apoſtolic tradition, ſince the holy ſcripture gives us no more account of it, than by only remarking how fully the Bleſſed Virgin was reſolved to ſerve God with an entire purity. The title which hath been conſtantly appropriated to her in all ages, as often as ſhe is mentioned, is a good argument to confirm this belief.

Biſhop Pearſon is wholly of this opinion, in his expoſition of the apoſtles creed: "We believe, ſays he, the mother of our Lord to have been not only before and after his nativity, but alſo for ever, the moſt immaculate and bleſſed virgin. For though it may be thought ſufficient, as to the myſtery of the incarnation, that when our Saviour was conceived and born, his mother was a virgin; though whatſoever ſhould have followed after, could have no reflective operation upon the firſt fruit of her womb; though there be no farther mention in the creed, than that he was born of the Virgin Mary; yet the peculiar eminency and unparalleled privilege of that mother, the ſpecial honour and reverence due to that ſon, and ever paid by her; the regard of that Holy Ghoſt who came upon her, and the power of the higheſt which overſhadowed her; the ſingular goodneſs and piety of Joſeph, to whom ſhe was eſpouſed, have perſuaded the church of God in all ages to believe, that ſhe ſtill continued in the ſame virginity; and therefore is to be acknowledged ἀειπαρθένος, as the Greek church always called her; and from them the Latin, *ſemper virgo*, "The perpetual virgin;" as if the gate of the ſanctuary in the prophet Ezekiel were to be underſtood of her: *This gate ſhall be ſhut; it ſhall not be opened; and no man ſhall enter in by it, becauſe the Lord, the God of Iſrael, hath entered in by it; therefore it ſhall be ſhut.*" Many indeed have taken the boldneſs to deny this truth, becauſe not recorded in the ſacred writings: and not only ſo, but to aſſert the contrary, as delivered in the ſcriptures; but with no ſucceſs. For though as they object, St. Matthew teſtified, *That Joſeph knew not Mary, until ſhe had brought forth her firſt-born ſon.* From whence they would infer, that afterwards he knew her; yet the manner of the ſcripture-language produceth no ſuch inference. When God ſaid to Jacob, *I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have ſpoken to thee of*, Gen. xviii. 18. It follows not, that when that was done the God of Jacob left him. When the concluſion of Deuteronomy was written, it was ſaid of Moſes, *No man knoweth of his ſepulchre unto this day.* But it were a weak argument to infer from thence, that the ſepulchre of Moſes hath not been known ever ſince. Again, 'tis true that Chriſt is termed the firſt-born ſon of Mary. From whence they infer ſhe muſt needs have a ſecond; but might as well conclude, that whereſoever there is one, there muſt be two. For in this particular, the

the ſcripture notion of priority excludeth an antecedent, but inferreth not a conſequent. It ſuppoſeth none to have gone before, but concludeth not any to follow after. *Sanctify unto me*, ſaith God, *all the firſt-born*; which was a firm and fixed law, immediately obliging upon the birth. Whereas, if the firſt-born had included a relation to a ſecond, there could have been no preſent certainty, but a ſuſpenſion of obedience. Nor had the firſt-born been ſanctified of itſelf, but the ſecond had ſanctified the firſt.

As to our Lord's brethren, it has been hinted before in what ſenſe they are ſo called.

Some, inſtead of leſſening, have over-magnified the Bleſſed Virgin, reſpecting her as a Goddeſs; and offering up prayers and oblations in her name; and particularly a kind of bread or cake which the Greeks called Κολλυρὶς (or collyride) whence theſe heretics were named Collyridians. Theſe were principally a ſet of women in Arabia, who fell into this kind of idolatry. Epiphanius wrote on purpoſe to confute this ſuperſtition, ſhewing how the honour due to the Bleſſed Virgin ought to be diſtinguiſhed from that adoration and worſhip which are proper to God alone; leſt we ſhould glorify the creature inſtead of the Creator.

The Neſtorians came next in order of time; and attributed too little to the Bleſſed Virgin, denying her the honourable appellation which the church then, and long before had given her of Θεοτόκος, that is, *The mother of God*, becauſe they would not allow that her ſon was God incarnate. They were condemned by a general council held at Epheſus in the year 431.

The Eutychian heretics, who quicky followed the Neſtorians, ran into the contrary extreme. For pretending to draw an argument for their hereſy from the quality of the mother of God, they gloried in paying her more honour than the catholicks. And Peter Fullo, one of the worſt of them, who had thrice uſurped the ſee of Antioch, was the firſt who began to call upon her by way of invocation in prayer; in which he was too groſly followed by thoſe who otherwiſe condemn him as a heretic. I mean thoſe of the Romiſh communion.

The worſhip of the Virgin Mary, univerſally prevails in the countries where the Romiſh religion is profeſſed, but no where with greater pomp of ſuperſtition and ſplendor of outward veneration than at Loretto, a city in the marquiſate of Ancona, belonging to the eccleſiaſtical ſtate in Italy, where is an immenſe profuſion of treaſure, which has been offered to her at different times by the votaries of that religion in all ages, ever ſince the Romiſh clergy have made the belief paſs current that the Santa Caſa, or holy houſe, in which the bleſſed Virgin Mary is ſaid to have been born, ſaluted by the angel and brought up her ſon till he was twelve years of age, and which the Roman catholics pretend was by the miniſtry of angels carried through the air from Galilee to Terſato in Dalmatia, on the eaſt ſide of the Adriatic

ſea, in the year 1291, and in three years and a half afterwards tranſported over the gulph of Venice into Italy, and after two or three ſhort migrations or removals was at length fixed in its preſent ſituation at Loretto. Over this holy houſe is a magnificent church built, and in it an image of the bleſſed Virgin placed in a niche, with the heavenly infant on her right arm, and a triple crown on her head, the whole ſtatue being covered with diamonds and pearls, and round it a ſort of rainbow of precious ſtones of various colours. All the altars, utenſils, and ornaments, are immenſely rich. The ſacriſty or treaſury is filled with jewels, gold veſſels and ornaments more precious than gold itſelf; the votive preſents of emperors, kings, princes, empreſſes, queens, popes, and other perſonages of both ſexes for theſe many hundred years paſt: Works of ſilver are not thought worthy to be admitted here. The whole is computed to be worth nine millions of rix-dollars. The annual revenue of the Santa Caſa, in land, &c. is between twenty-ſeven and thirty thouſand crowns, beſides preſents and votive donations. To this holy houſe five hundred thouſand pilgrims have often reſorted in one year, between Eaſter and Whitſuntide; and during two days in Septemper, at the feſtival of the bleſſed Virgin's Nativity, no leſs than two hundred thouſand have viſited Loretto. This prodigious concourſe of people was indeed before the reformation; but the uſual number now is between forty and fifty thouſand: and as none of theſe come empty handed, we may eaſily conclude, that its riches are ſtill increaſing. This is reckoned by all good catholics to be the moſt ſacred place under heaven.

"Some writers, ſays Dr. Nichols, both in the Greek and Latin church, tell a ſtrange ſtory about the bleſſed Virgin's aſſumption into heaven; and that with great variety in their relations; ſome affirming her to be conveyed thither alive, like Enoch and Elias: others, that after her death ſhe roſe again, and was carried triumphantly into heaven. But all the hiſtory of this tranſlation is taken from apocryphal books, which deſerve not much credit. And though the church of Rome has adopted this ſtory into her worſhip, and celebrates it annually with a particular ſervice on the fifteenth of Auguſt; yet the authors who ſupport this hiſtory, are condemned by all the learned men of that church. I muſt own, that this notion is of conſiderable antiquity: for 'tis undoubtedly as old as Epiphanius, who in his account of it ſays, *he will do nothing to depreciate the honour of the Virgin; and therefore will neither give his aſſent to that opinion, nor yet contradict it; but rather acquieſce in the Scriptures, which ſay nothing at all of it.*

MARY

MARY of CLEOPHAS.

ST. Jerom ſays, that Mary had the name of Cleophas, on account of her father, her family, or ſome other reaſon not known. Others believe with greater probability, that ſhe was wife of Cleophas, and mother of St. James the Leſs, and of St. Simon, the brethren of our Lord. Theſe latter authors take Mary the mother of James, and Mary, wife of Cleophas, to be the ſame perſon. St. John give her the name of Mary, wife of Cleophas, and the other three Evangeliſts, Mary mother of James. Cleophas and Alpheus are the ſame man; as James ſon of Mary, wife of Cleophas, is the ſame as James ſon of Alpheus. In the Hebrew tongue, Alpheus and Cleophas differ only in the manner in which the Greeks have written and pronounced theſe two names. Cleophas may be derived from the Hebrew *Cheleph*, which ſignifies, to change; as much as to ſay inconſtant, or given to change; or from the city of Cheleph or Heleph, mentioned in the 19 chapter of Joſhua; and which was a frontier town of Napthali in Galilee; ſo that Cleophas or Alpheus might be of this city originally.

But to return from this digreſſion to Mary, wife of Cleophas: we know but very few particulars of her life. 'Tis thought ſhe was the ſiſter of the holy virgin, and that ſhe was the mother of James the Leſs, of Joſes, of Simeon, and of Judas, which in the goſpel are called the brethren of Jeſus Chriſt, that is, his couſin-germans. She believed early in Chriſt, and kept him company in his journeys, in order to miniſter to him. She was preſent at the laſt paſſover, juſt before the death of our Saviour; ſhe followed him to mount Calvary; and during his paſſion ſhe was together with the Virgin, at the foot of his croſs. She was alſo preſent at his burial, and on the Friday before had prepared the perfumes for embalming of him. But going to his tomb very early on Sunday morning, with ſome of the other women, they learned from the mouth of an angel, that he was riſen; the news of which they carried to the apoſtles. By the way Jeſus appeared to them; and they embraced his feet, worſhipping him. The year when Mary the wife of Cleophas died is not known; but the Greeks keep the eighth of April in memory of the holy women, who brought perfumes to embalm the body of Chriſt, and pretend to have their bodies at Conſtantinople in a church of the holy Virgin, built by Juſtin II. The Roman martyrology marks

marks the feſtival of St. Mary, the wife of Cleophas, on the 9th of April; and will have, that her body was tranſlated into the city of Veroli near Rome. Others ſay, and doubtleſs with equal truth, that her relicks are preſerved in a little city of Provence called the three Marys, ſituated near the ſea, on the banks of the Rhone.

MARY SALOME.

MARY Salome was the daughter of Mary Cleophas, mentioned in the preceding article, and the ſiſter of St. James the Leſs, and others, who are in Scripture called the brethren of our Lord. She was couſin-german to the bleſſed Jeſus, according to the fleſh, and niece to the bleſſed Virgin Mary. Her proper name was Salome, and was improperly called Mary, which was the name of her mother.

Others will have it, that Salome was the daughter of Joſeph, the huſband of the holy Virgin, founding their opinion on the teſtimony of Epiphanius.

But however this be, ſhe was the huſband of Zebedee, and mother of St. James the Great, and St John the Evangeliſt. She was alſo one of thoſe holy women that uſed to attend upon our bleſſed Saviour in his journeys, and to miniſter to him. It was ſhe that requeſted Jeſus to place her two ſons James and John, the one on his right hand and the other on his left in his kingdom. But the Son of God anſwered her and her two ſons: "Ye know not what ye "aſk. Are ye able to drink of the "cup that I ſhall drink of, and be "baptized with the baptiſm that I am "baptized with?" They ſay unto him, "We are able. And he ſaith "unto them, ye ſhall drink indeed "of my cup, and be baptiſed with "the baptiſm that I am baptiſed "with; but to ſit on my right hand "and on my left is not mine to "give, but it ſhall be given to them "for whom it is prepared of my "father."

Salome gave a remarkable proof of her faith when ſhe followed the bleſſed Jeſus to Calvary, and did not forſake him even at the croſs. She was alſo one of the holy women who brought perfumes to embalm him, and for that purpoſe came early on the Sunday morning to the ſepulchre. As they walked towards the place where their great Lord and maſter was interred, they ſaid one to another, "Who ſhall roll away the "ſtone from the mouth of the ſe-"pulchre?"

" pulchre?" But when they came thither, they found the obſtacle already removed, and ſaw a meſſenger from the courts of heaven, who informed them, that the bleſſed Jeſus was riſen from the chambers of the duſt. As they were returning to Jeruſalem, to carry theſe welcome tidings to the diſciples, Jeſus himſelf appeared to them and ſaid, " Be not " afraid; go tell my brethren, that " they go into Galilee, and there " they ſhall ſee me."

We find no farther particulars in the ſacred writings concerning Salome; and what is related concerning her in many ſpurious hiſtories, does not deſerve to be mentioned. I ſhall therefore only add, that, according to the Roman Martyrology, ſhe died at Jeruſalem on the 22d of October, but in what year is uncertain.

MARY the Siſter of LAZARUS.

THIS holy woman has been prepoſterouſly confounded with the ſinful perſon who ſat at the feet of the bleſſed Jeſus weeping, while he was at meat in the houſe of Simon the leper. (ſee Luke vii. 37, 39.) Who this ſinner was is unknown, ſome will have her to be Mary Magdalene; but this opinion has nothing more than conjecture for its baſis.

But whoever that ſinner was, ſhe was a very different perſon from Mary the ſiſter of Lazarus, who, with her ſiſter Martha, lived with their brother at Bethany, a village near Jeruſalem. The bleſſed Jeſus had a particular affection for this family, and often retired to their houſe with his diſciples. One day, and perhaps the firſt time that Jeſus went thither, Martha received him with remarkable affection, and took the greateſt pains in providing a proper entertainment for him; but Mary her ſiſter continued ſitting at our Saviour's feet, liſtening to his words with peculiar attention. This Martha conſidered as an inſtance of diſreſpect, and therefore ſaid to Jeſus, " Lord, doſt thou not care that my " ſiſter hath left me to ſerve alone? " bid her therefore that ſhe help " me." But the bleſſed Jeſus juſtified Mary, by telling her ſiſter, that ſhe had choſen the better part, which ſhould not be taken from her.

Some time after their brother Lazarus fell ſick, and his ſiſters ſent to acquaint Jeſus of the misfortune; but he did not arrive at Bethany till after Lazarus was dead. Martha hearing Jeſus was come into the neighbourhood, came to him and told him, that if he had not been abſent her brother had been ſtill alive. Jeſus promiſed her that her brother ſhould riſe again. To which Martha anſwered, " I know that he " ſhall

" ſhall riſe again at the laſt day." Jeſus replied, " I am the reſurrection " and the life; he that believeth in me, " tho' he were dead yet ſhall he live; " and whoſoever liveth, and believ- " eth in me, ſhall never die; believeſt " thou this?" Martha anſwered, " Yea, Lord: I believe that thou " art the Chriſt the Son of God, " which ſhould come into the world." Having ſaid this ſhe departed, and gave her ſiſter notice privately, that Jeſus was come. Mary, as ſoon as ſhe heard the welcome tidings, aroſe and went to Jeſus; and as Martha had done before her, ſaid, " Lord, if " thou hadſt been here, my brother " had not died." The bleſſed Jeſus was greatly moved at the pathetic complaints of theſe two worthy ſiſters, and on aſking where they had buried him, they conducted him to the ſepulchre. On his arrival at the place where the body of Lazarus was depoſited, the great Redeemer of mankind groaned deeply in his ſpirit: he wept, he prayed to his father, and then cried with a loud voice, " Lazarus, come forth." The dead obeyed the voice of the Son of God, Lazarus immediately revived, and Jeſus reſtored him to his ſiſters.

After performing this ſtupendous miracle, Jeſus departed from the neighbourhood of Jeruſalem, and did not return thither till ſome days before the paſſover. Six days before that feſtival Jeſus came again to Bethany with his diſciples, and was invited to ſupper at the houſe of Simon the leper. Martha attended, and Lazarus was one of the gueſts. During the ſupper, Mary, to expreſs her gratitude, took a pound of ſpikenard, a very precious perfume, and poured it on the head and feet of Jeſus, wiping his feet with the hair of her head; and the whole houſe was filled with the odour of the ointment. Judas Iſcariot was highly offended at this generous action; but his maſter vindicated Mary, and told him that by this ſhe had prevented his embalment, ſignifying, that his death and burial were at hand.

After this we have no account of Mary, the ſiſter of Lazarus, in the ſacred writings. Several authors indeed, by not diſtinguiſhing properly between Mary the ſiſter of Martha, and Mary Magdalene, ſay, that ſhe was preſent at the crucifixion of the great redeemer of mankind; and alſo that both ſhe and her ſiſter accompanied the women who went to embalm his body. This is not indeed improbable; but it is certain neither of them are particularly mentioned by the evangeliſts. The ancient Latins believed, and the Greeks are ſtill of the ſame opinion, that both Martha and Mary continued at Jeruſalem, and died there; and ſeveral ancient Martyrologies place their feaſt on the nineteenth of January.

MARY

MARY MAGDALENE.

MARY Magdalene was a native either of Magdala, a town in Galilee, on the other ſide Jordan, or Magdalos, a town ſituated at the foot of Mount Carmel, and had her ſirname from the place of her birth. Some will have it that ſhe was the ſinner mentioned by St. Luke, chap. vii. 36, &c. but this opinion is built only on conjecture. Both St. Matthew and St. Mark tell us, that Jeſus had caſt out of her ſeven devils; which ſome underſtand in a literal, and others in a figurative ſenſe.

But however this be, ſhe became a conſtant attendant on the bleſſed Jeſus, after he had removed her plague. She followed him to Mount Calvary, continued amidſt the Roman guards at the foot of the croſs, with the Holy Virgin, and ſaw his precious body laid in the tomb. After which ſhe returned to Jeruſalem to purchaſe ſpices to embalm him as ſoon as the ſabbath was over.

It was ſhe who carried the welcome tidings to Peter and John; and to her our bleſſed Lord himſelf firſt appeared after his reſurrection. The apoſtles did not however believe her report till it was confirmed by others, and they themſelves had ſeen the Saviour of the world.

We have no farther account of Mary Magdalene in the ſacred writings. But Modeſtus, archbiſhop of Conſtantinople in the ſeventh century, tells us, that ſhe continued at Jeruſalem till the death of the Holy Virgin, after which ſhe retired to Epheſus, and lived with St. John till ſhe ſealed the faith ſhe had ſo long profeſſed with her blood. She was buried by the chriſtians at Epheſus, where her tomb was ſhewn in the ſeventh century. But the emperor Leo the wiſe cauſed her body to be removed from Epheſus to Conſtantinople, the latter end of the ninth century, and in order to its being interred in the church erected to the honour of the apoſtles.

Thus have I given the fulleſt account I was able of the followers of the bleſſed Jeſus; the perſons who ſpread the light of the goſpel over the whole world, removed the veil of ignorance and ſuperſtition drawn over the kingdoms of the earth, and taught us the method of attaining eternal happineſs in the courts of the new Jeruſalem. May we all follow their glorious example; may we imitate their piety, their charity, their love: Then ſhall we *paſs through things temporal in ſuch a manner, that we ſhall finally gain the things eternal*, and be admitted as worthy gueſts at the marriage-ſupper of the Lamb.

FINIS.

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